

# *The Key to the Entire Situation*<sup>1</sup>

The Peach Orchard, July 2, 1863

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*“The Peach Orchard is located at the junction of the Emmetsburg and the Wheatfield...roads, and is on a hill or high knoll... Many histories have been written; but, in all, the fighting at the Peach Orchard, which barely escaped bringing disaster to the Army [of the Potomac], has been hardly referred to, as of any importance.”*<sup>2</sup>

Capt. John Bigelow, 9<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Battery

Of all the landmarks on the Gettysburg battlefield made famous by the fighting of July 2, 1863 (such as Little Round Top, Devil's Den, the Wheatfield, Culp's Hill, and Cemetery Hill), the one that has received the least amount of attention is the Peach Orchard. This is somewhat puzzling, for not only was the combat that occurred there critical in the overall struggle that day, but it also involved some of the most well-known personalities of the battle: men such as James Longstreet, Daniel Sickles, George Meade, and William Barksdale. Even more surprising, two of the most hotly debated controversies of this historic engagement, the Meade-Sickles Controversy and the Longstreet Countermarch episode, are associated with the events surrounding the Peach Orchard.

Despite this lack attention, it can be argued that no single area more heavily influenced the events of the second day of the battle than did the Peach Orchard. Indeed the orchard, and the surrounding terrain, affected nearly every phase of the battle, from the creation of the opposing battle lines and battle plans that morning, to the tactical level of troop movements and combat in the afternoon and early evening. This paper will attempt to examine the impact the Peach Orchard had on the various levels of command of both armies and its influence on the fighting that took place along the entire left and left-center of the Union line that day.

The Peach Orchard, and much of the high ground on which it was located, was owned in 1863 by Joseph Sherfy, whose farm straddled the Emmitsburg road about two miles south of Gettysburg. Nearly fifty acres in size, the farm consisted of crop and pasture fields, along with

three orchards. It was from the orchards that Sherfy earned his living, being one of the first in Adams County to concentrate exclusively on fruit production as a business.<sup>3</sup>

Sherfy's farm buildings were on the west side of the Emmitsburg road, opposite his main orchards. The Peach Orchard actually consisted of two separate orchards. The more famous of the two, "*the* Peach Orchard," consisted of four acres of mature peach trees and was located southeast of the intersection of the Wheatfield and Emmitsburg roads. The other orchard, located directly north of the Wheatfield road, was approximately six acres in size and contained younger peach trees.<sup>4</sup>

More important than the orchards themselves was the "hill or high knoll" on which they were located. This knoll, according to Brig. Gen. Henry Hunt, the Army of the Potomac's chief of artillery, "is...formed by the intersection of two bold ridges, one from Devil's Den [today called Houck's Ridge], the other along the Emmitsburg road [Emmitsburg Road Ridge]...." This plateau was elevated on three sides (east, south, and west), rising between twenty and thirty feet above the surrounding terrain, and offered a nearly unobstructed view across the rolling fields and pastures in all directions. Little could Sherfy have realized when he purchased the property in the 1840s how significant this rise of ground would become in July 1863.<sup>5</sup>

Following the bloody and accidental clash of July 1, 1863, in which segments of the opposing armies had collided west and north of Gettysburg, both commanders (Gen. Robert E. Lee, commanding the Army of Northern Virginia and Maj. Gen. George G. Meade, commanding the Army of the Potomac) were concentrating their scattered forces in preparation of a second day of fighting. As the opposing battle lines formed that night and into the morning of July 2, various commanders from both armies began to take notice of the Peach Orchard and its associated topography. There were several reasons for this, the primary one being the location of the orchard in relationship to the contending battle lines.<sup>6</sup>

Having been forced from the fields and woodlots north and west of town on July 1, the Army of the Potomac began to arrange its line on a series of hills and ridges to the south and southeast. When finally formed, the line took the shape of a giant fishhook. The "barb" and "curve" of the hook was located on Culp's Hill, held by the 12<sup>th</sup> Corps, along with remnants of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> corps on Cemetery Hill. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Corps occupied the Union center along Cemetery Ridge, or the "shank" of the hook. Assigned to hold the Union left flank was Maj. Gen. Daniel Sickles' 3<sup>rd</sup> Corps, which was supposed to occupy the lower portion of Cemetery Ridge and, if possible, Little Round Top (the fishhook's "eye"). Meade's only reserve, the 5<sup>th</sup> Corps was located behind the army's right rear. His largest corps, the 6<sup>th</sup>, was at that time on a forced march, and was still ten to fifteen miles away.<sup>7</sup>

That morning the Confederate battle line stretched from Benner's Hill, east of town, through the streets of Gettysburg to the Lutheran Theological Seminary west of town and then southward along Seminary Ridge, as far as the McMillan Woods.<sup>8</sup> Thus the Peach Orchard, and the knoll described earlier, were centrally located between the opposing lines, being opposite the Union left and left-center and adjacent to the Confederate right. As this was the only high ground between the Seminary and Cemetery ridges, its military importance obviously increased and would eventually demand the attention of opposing officers.

*"In front of General Longstreet the enemy held a position from which, if he could be driven, it was thought our artillery could be used to advantage in assailing the more elevated ground beyond...."*<sup>9</sup>

Gen. Robert E. Lee

Throughout the morning, as both Meade and Lee continued to concentrate their forces, they also formulated their plans for the renewal of fighting. Unknown to each was that their respective

plans, along with the actions of subordinate officers, threw added weight to the value of the Peach Orchard and its environs.

Meade's plan was largely dictated by his position. His compact line, nearly all of which was anchored on high ground, was approximately three miles in length and gave him the advantage of interior lines and excellent fields of fire. It also protected the Taneytown road and Baltimore pike, the army's only two routes of supply, communications, and possibly retreat. Overall, it was an excellent defensive position. Maj. Gen. Winfield Hancock, commanding the 2<sup>nd</sup> Corps, called it "a very strong one." From a Confederate perspective, Brig. Gen. William Pendleton, the army's chief of artillery, summed up the Union position as "naturally formidable and everywhere difficult of approach." Meade certainly must have agreed and in a large part, because of its strength, decided to establish a strong defensive line and await Confederate movements.<sup>10</sup>

The army's position left it with several possible disadvantages. One was its vulnerability to a turning or flanking movement, especially toward its left or the south. Another was that the very features which made the position excellent for defensive purposes, also made it extremely difficult for Meade to assume offensive operations. Until the arrival of the 6<sup>th</sup> Corps, which would complete the concentration of his army, Meade felt the wisest choice of action was to act defensively.<sup>11</sup>

Finding the battle forced upon him and "in a measure unavoidable," General Lee decided to follow up his partial success of July 1 and assault the Union line on July 2, despite its obvious strength. He hoped to attack as early in the day as possible, before the Army of the Potomac could complete its concentration.<sup>12</sup>

Sensing the key to the Union line was Cemetery Hill, but wanting to avoid a costly direct assault upon it, Lee developed a strategy he hoped would dislodge the Army of the Potomac by turning its position. The Union right, at Culp's Hill, was obviously too strong to attack directly, and outflanking it would overextend the Confederate lines. Thus from the earliest hours of July 2 Lee's focus was on the left flank of the Union line. When finalized, Lee's plan was to use two veteran divisions of Lt. Gen. James Longstreet's 1<sup>st</sup> Corps, numbering more than fourteen thousand, to crush the Union left with an irresistible en echelon assault. This style of attack would strike the extreme left of the Union line first and then progress, with fresh units pushed into the fray, northward, roughly following the Emmitsburg road. Simultaneously, Lee hoped a successful demonstration by Lt. Gen. Richard Ewell's 2<sup>nd</sup> Corps against the Union right, at Culp's Hill and Cemetery Hill, would constrain Meade from pulling troops out of line to reinforce his left. If things went well Ewell could even convert his diversion into a real assault and turn the Union right. Lt. Gen. A. P. Hill's 3<sup>rd</sup> Corps, facing the Union center, was assigned a two-pronged role. He would "threaten the enemy's center, to prevent re-enforcements being drawn to either wing, and co-operate with his right division [Maj. Gen. Richard H. Anderson's] in Longstreet's attack." Anderson's division brought the main assaulting force to nearly 21,500 men.<sup>13</sup>

This final plan was developed throughout the morning as more details and information became available. From the earliest hours, however, the central idea of Lee's plan was clear: to place Longstreet's force opposite of, or "enveloping the enemy's left, which he was to drive in." To strike the Army of the Potomac squarely on the flank, Lee envisioned Longstreet's men forming perpendicular to the main Confederate line. From the orders he received, General Hill understood that Longstreet was to form his line "very nearly at right angles to mine." On Hill's right Maj. Gen. Richard Anderson was told that Longstreet "would occupy the ground on the right; that he would assault the extreme left of the enemy line and drive him toward Gettysburg...." The attack was thus designed to move in a north-northeast direction. Longstreet later wrote that Lee's orders were to "envelop the enemy's left ... following up, as near as possible, the direction of the Emmitsburg road," a convenient landmark to guide the attack upon.<sup>14</sup>

What Lee would not have been able to see, but absolutely needed to know in order to set up Longstreet's attack, was the exact location of the Union left flank. Lee wrote two reports on the battle, and it seems clear in both that he did not have an accurate understanding of the Army of the

Potomac's exact position. The more detailed of the two was written in January 1864, in which he described the Union battle line as follows:

The enemy occupied a strong position, with his right upon two commanding elevations adjacent to each other, one southeast and the other, known as Cemetery Hill, immediately south of the town, which lay at its base. His line extended thence upon the high ground along the Emmitsburg road, with a steep ridge in rear [Cemetery Ridge], which was also occupied. This ridge was difficult of ascent, particularly the two hills above mentioned as forming the northern extremity, and a third at the other end [Little Round Top], on which the enemy's left rested....<sup>15</sup>

Here, Lee seems to indicate that he believed that Union troops occupied both the "high ground along the Emmitsburg road" and "a steep ridge in rear [Cemetery Ridge], which was also occupied." Being written after the fact, it is impossible today to discern if Lee was describing the situation as he perceived it on the morning of July 2 or if, with hindsight, he was referring to events and circumstances later that afternoon. One also must question whether Lee was recounting what he could actually see from his location at the Lutheran Theological Seminary (where he created his plans), or basing his description on knowledge of the field that he gained later.

More than likely it was the former. Although it is clearly understood today that Union troops did not occupy the Emmitsburg Road Ridge in force until that afternoon, Lee believed a section of the Army of the Potomac's line formed along the road that morning. From the seminary grounds Lee could have easily seen Northern troops on Cemetery Hill and the northern end of Cemetery Ridge. However, as that ridge continues southward it loses elevation and disappears (from Lee's perspective) around the Nicholas Codori farmstead, behind the northern extension of the Emmitsburg Road Ridge. Thus, any Union troops on Cemetery Ridge, south of the Codori buildings (Brig. Gen. John Caldwell's division of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Corps and most of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Corps), were blocked from Lee's view. Easily visible along the Emmitsburg road, however, would have been Union troops (mostly skirmishers and supporting elements from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Corps) placed there during the early morning. It is highly likely, therefore, that on the morning of July 2 Lee believed the main Union line was located along the Emmitsburg road.<sup>16</sup> The placement of these troops ties in directly to the Meade-Sickles Controversy, and the eventual advance of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Corps to the Emmitsburg road that afternoon, both of which will be discussed in detail later.

What Lee also could not determine from the seminary grounds was the location of the Army of the Potomac's left flank. He therefore ordered a reconnaissance early that morning to obtain this vital information. The scouting mission was conducted by Capt. Samuel Johnston, an engineer on Lee's staff, and involves the second controversy mentioned earlier, the Johnston Reconnaissance and Longstreet's Countermarch.<sup>17</sup>

As these important incidents have been covered in detail elsewhere, and because they do not fall within the limits of this study, a thorough analysis of them is not necessary. What will be examined, however, is how these events impacted Lee's plan and its ultimate execution in relationship to the fighting at the Peach Orchard.

As for Captain Johnston's reconnaissance, the principal question is not "How was it conducted?" or "Was it successful?" but "What information did General Lee derive from it and how did it impact his planning?" Upon receiving his orders from Lee, Johnston started his ride south, toward the Union left, shortly after daybreak. According to Captain Johnston's account he then crossed the Emmitsburg road near the Peach Orchard, reached Little Round Top and then eventually returned to Lee's headquarters at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at around 9 A.M.<sup>18</sup>



The information Johnston gleaned from his ride, while useful in some respects, probably was somewhat disappointing to Lee. While Johnston was able to confirm that no Union troops occupied Little Round Top or the Peach Orchard, he could not pinpoint the exact location of the Army of the Potomac's left flank. All Johnston stated was that from the summit of Little Round Top no Northern troops were visible, either to the northwest or north along Cemetery Ridge. From this somewhat scanty intelligence, along with what he could actually see from the seminary grounds, Lee could only be sure that the Union left did not extend very far south from Cemetery Hill. This in turn must have raised his hopes that a large segment of the Union army had still not arrived on the field, and thus the opportunity to "defeat the Federal army in detail before it could be concentrated" still existed.<sup>19</sup>

Based on this knowledge Lee probably assumed that the Union left and left center were located along the Emmitsburg road, ending somewhere short, or north of the Peach Orchard.<sup>20</sup> Having no other choice Lee then finalized his plans to attack this flank. According to Longstreet, he was ordered, with the divisions of Maj. Gen. LaFayette McLaws and Maj. Gen. John B. Hood, to march southward, "concealing [their] movements ... from view of the Federals," then deploy beyond and perpendicular to the Union left. Once in position Longstreet was then to attack "following up the direction of the Emmitsburg road toward Cemetery Ridge...." Lee's orders concerning the exact location of Longstreet's deployment and details concerning his attack were somewhat vague due to the unknown location of the Union left. This probably caused Lee little concern, however, as his orders were almost always general or discretionary in nature, thus allowing his subordinates the flexibility to adjust to the circumstances confronting them.<sup>21</sup>

Even with the stepping-off point for Longstreet's assault unknown, the Peach Orchard area had already taken on a greater significance from the Confederate perspective. It immediately drew Lee's notice and then played heavily in the execution of his plan. Although Lee's description of the Union battle line lacked detail in both of his battle reports, it is obvious that he saw the Peach Orchard as a key to the success of this attack. Less than a month after the battle his account, while extremely vague, still referenced the Peach Orchard area:

The enemy held a high and commanding ridge, along which he had massed a large amount of artillery. General Ewell occupied the left of our line, General Hill the center, and General Longstreet the right. In front of General Longstreet the enemy held a position from which, if he could be driven, it was thought our artillery could be used to advantage in assailing the more elevated ground beyond, and thus enable us to reach the crest of the ridge. That officer was directed to endeavor to carry this position....<sup>22</sup>

The "position from which ... it was thought our artillery could be used to advantage" was the Peach Orchard Knoll and the Emmitsburg Road Ridge to the north. Lee felt this high ground would serve as a natural platform for his artillery, "in assailing the more elevated ground beyond," his reference to the northern end of Cemetery Ridge and Cemetery Hill. Further, in describing the subsequent fighting Lee wrote, "After a severe struggle, Longstreet succeeded in getting possession of and holding *the desired ground*" (emphasis added).<sup>23</sup>

In his January 1864 report Lee also described the role he envisioned for the Peach Orchard in his plans:

It was determined to make the principal attack upon the enemy's left, and endeavor to gain a position from which it was thought that our artillery could be brought to bear with effect.<sup>24</sup>

The "position from which it was thought that our artillery could be brought to bear with effect" was again the Peach Orchard. Longstreet himself later directly linked the Peach Orchard area with

Lee's design of using it for his artillery, writing, "the peach orchard [was] on a piece of elevated ground that General Lee desired me to take and hold for his artillery...." From these accounts it seems that Lee envisioned Longstreet occupying the Peach Orchard, with little or no struggle (thus putting him beyond the Union left), positioning artillery upon it and then launching his two divisions from that general location northward, guiding on the Emmitsburg road. This would allow Longstreet to strike the Union line squarely on the flank and rear and roll it up toward Cemetery Ridge, "the more elevated ground beyond."<sup>25</sup>

Lee gave his final orders to Longstreet somewhere around 11 A.M. After receiving permission to wait for Brig. Gen. Evander Law's Alabama brigade to reach the field, Longstreet started his approach march at approximately 1 P.M.<sup>26</sup>

This movement would later generate debate, controversy, and recrimination, for it was poorly conducted and encountered unexpected obstacles that ultimately delayed Longstreet's assault. The principal problem was the discovery in mid-march that that route chosen would reveal Longstreet's troops to the Union signal station on Little Round Top. After a time-consuming countermarch and approach along a circuitous route, the head of Longstreet's column neared the Millerstown road, west of Warfield Ridge, sometime around 3 P.M. Having reached this area Longstreet fully expected to be beyond the Army of the Potomac's left, and thus he planned on simply marching his men across the Emmitsburg road, face them to the left (thus forming them perpendicular to the road) and then move forward.<sup>27</sup> As they reached the woods lining the crest of Warfield Ridge directly west of the Peach Orchard, however, the sight that greeted the troops of McLaws' division, who were leading the march, revealed a completely unexpected situation. Col. Benjamin G. Humphreys, commanding the 21<sup>st</sup> Mississippi in Brig. Gen. William Barksdale's brigade, later wrote:

I understood at the time that our movement to the Peach Orchard was to get on the enemies left flank but when we arrived there, it was unmistakably any thing but the flank. It was a formidable compact line of frowning Artillery and bristling bayonets."<sup>28</sup>

Obviously, the information Captain Johnston had delivered to Lee eight hours earlier was completely outdated by the time Longstreet's divisions arrived on Warfield Ridge. During that time a major shift in the Union battle line had taken place. This movement involves the last and most famous of the heretofore mentioned episodes related to the Peach Orchard: the Meade-Sickles Controversy.

*"About 3 p.m. I rode out to the extreme left ... when I found that Major-General Sickles, commanding Third Corps, not fully apprehending ... instructions ... had advanced ... his corps some half a mile or three-quarters of a mile in front of the line ... on ... which it designed his corps should rest. Having found Major-General Sickles, I was explaining to him that he was too far in advance ... when the enemy opened upon him with several batteries ... and immediately ... made a most vigorous assault."*<sup>29</sup>

Major General George Meade, official report, October 1, 1863

*"It was not through any misinterpretation of orders. It was either a good line or a bad one, and, whichever it was, I took it on my own responsibility."*<sup>30</sup>

Maj. Gen. Daniel Sickles, testimony before the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War, February 26, 1864

Throughout the morning, as Lee formulated his offensive, the Peach Orchard area began to attract the attention of Maj. Gen. Daniel Sickles, commander of the Army of the Potomac's 3<sup>rd</sup> Corps. Responsible for holding the Union left, Sickles felt his assigned position on the southern end of Cemetery Ridge, for various reasons, was a poor one. The general concisely summed up his objections eight months after the battle, by stating:

... the direct line, from Hancock's left to Round Top was a line through swale, morass swamp, boulders, and forest and tangled undergrowth, unfit for infantry, impracticable for artillery, and hopelessly dominated by the ridge in front ....<sup>31</sup>

Additionally, Sickles believed his assigned position was too long for the approximately 10,700 troops under his command to occupy and would abandon "the Emmitsburg road and the intersecting roads leading to our left." The "intersecting roads" referred to the intersection of the Emmitsburg road and Wheatfield road, located atop the Peach Orchard Knoll. He also felt that the woods directly in his front (Weikert Woods, Trostle Woods, and Rose Woods) would mask Confederate movements and limit his field of fire, especially for his artillery.<sup>32</sup>

It is obvious, however, that Sickles' overriding concern or principal objection to his assigned position was in relation to the use of artillery. The "ridge in front" which he felt so "hopeless dominated" Cemetery Ridge was the Emmitsburg Road Ridge and Peach Orchard Knoll. Sickles not only stated that "I would have had no positions whatever for my artillery over one half of my [assigned] line," but also, and more importantly, he feared the Confederates would occupy the Peach Orchard and Emmitsburg road with their own batteries. While numerous Union and Confederate commanders, then and later, stated that Little Round Top, on which the 3<sup>rd</sup> Corps was to anchor its left, was the "key-point of ... [the] whole position," Sickles' attention seemed irresistibly drawn to the Peach Orchard Knoll and Emmitsburg Road Ridge to his front. Sickles later described his greatest fear in relation to this "commanding ground," writing:

... this vantage-ground, by which I mean the Emmitsburg road ridge ... the Emmitsburg road itself, and the intersecting roads leading to our left [on Peach Orchard Knoll], once in possession of the enemy ... would have enabled him to deliver his assault upon me ... with advantage of position and force that would have given Lee the victory."<sup>33</sup>

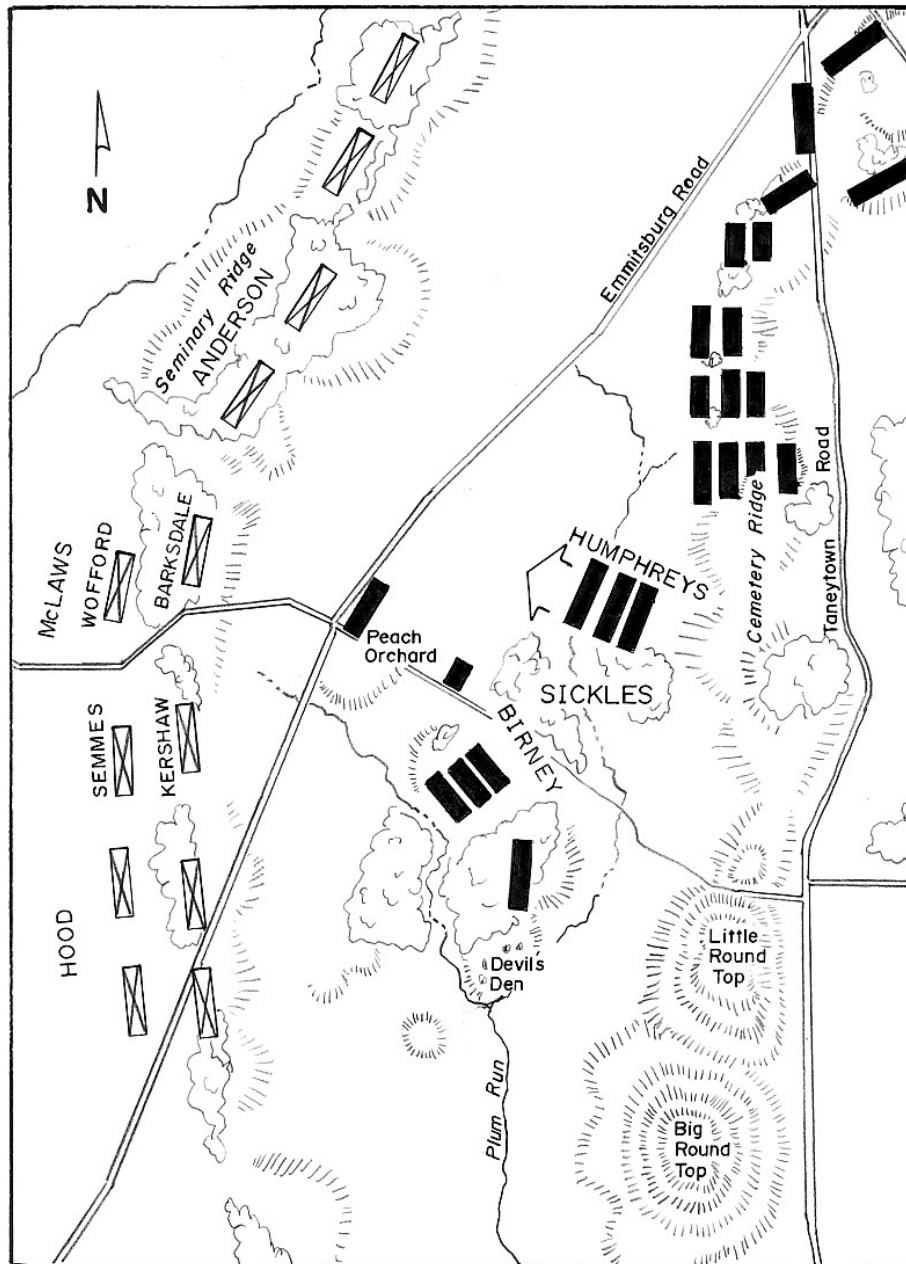
To prevent this, Sickles felt he had to take up an advanced line along the Emmitsburg road and Peach Orchard area. He further believed this line possessed additional advantages: It would protect the road itself, along with the intersection at the Peach Orchard, occupy higher ground, and lastly provide his artillery smooth platforms with excellent fields of fire.<sup>34</sup>

After repeated attempts throughout the morning and early afternoon to get Meade's permission to take up this new line, a frustrated Sickles finally decided to undertake one of the most hotly debated movements of the entire battle. After receiving a report that a reconnaissance he had ordered encountered Confederate troops moving behind Warfield Ridge, directly west of the Peach Orchard, Sickles quickly went into action, ordering his men to occupy the high ground he so desperately wanted. This movement began in earnest around 1 P.M. and was completed just before 4 P.M.<sup>35</sup>

The complicated and detailed events surrounding the Meade-Sickles Controversy, which have been thoroughly analyzed in numerous in-depth studies, lie beyond the scope of this work, as do the various arguments as to the pros and cons of Sickles' actions. What is beyond question, however, is that the existence of the Peach Orchard, and the knoll it occupied, heavily influenced Sickles' decision to advance to a new line that afternoon.<sup>36</sup>

This controversial movement involved pushing his two 3<sup>rd</sup> Corps' divisions forward up to three-quarters of a mile from his assigned position. When completed, Sickles' left flank, held by his 1<sup>st</sup> Division (Maj. Gen. David Birney), rested not on Little Round Top as Meade had directed, but at

Devil's Den, about 600 yards to the left front, or southwest. The line then ran northwesterly along Houck's ridge, through the Wheatfield, to the Peach Orchard. Here it turned, making a right angle, and connected with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division (Maj. Gen. Andrew A. Humphreys) near the Sherfy buildings. Humphreys' division then extended the line north along the Emmitsburg road, his unconnected right flank resting south of the Nicholas Codori farmstead. This was the basic situation that Longstreet encountered around 3 P.M. as he began to deploy McLaw's and Hood's divisions along Warfield Ridge, west of the Peach Orchard.<sup>37</sup>



*The 3<sup>rd</sup> Corps deploys to the Peach Orchard and Emmitsburg Road ridge.*

Up to this time the Peach Orchard and its surrounding environs had greatly shaped the thinking of high-ranking officers in both armies, including the development of both the Confederate and Union battle plans for July 2. Shortly after Longstreet and Sickles completed the final arrangements of their

respective lines that afternoon, the second day of the battle began in earnest. Once again the Peach Orchard played a substantial role in influencing, on a tactical level, the fighting that followed.

*“... it was very important that the peach orchard should be held ... the ground in the peach orchard being the best part of the field, which was known to the enemy as well as ourselves ... whoever held or could hold our place, held the key to the entire situation.”*<sup>38</sup>

Capt. Nelson Ames, Battery G, 1<sup>st</sup> New York Artillery

*“The weak point in this line was the salient at the Peach Orchard, which formed the key to Sickles’ position ....”*<sup>39</sup>

Col. A. L. Long, on General Lee’s staff

From the perspective of Daniel Sickles’ 3<sup>rd</sup> Corps, the above assessments were completely accurate on the afternoon of July 2, 1863. Upon taking up their forward position, the Peach Orchard was the “key” to this new line. Being the salient angle in its “V”-shaped line, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Corps had no hope of holding its advanced line without retaining possession of the Peach Orchard. If lost, not only would the corps’ line be cut in half, but both of its wings could easily be flanked and swept off the field.

The task of defending this crucial ground fell to the troops of Maj. Gen. David Birney’s 1<sup>st</sup> Division. On the left of Birney’s line, anchored at Devil’s Den, was his 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade (Brig. Gen. Hobart Ward), while his center, at the Wheatfield, was defended by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade (Col. Regis De Trobriand). It would be Brig. Gen. Charles Graham’s 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade who held the all-important angle at the Peach Orchard. Graham’s final position was along the Emmitsburg road, between the Peach Orchard and the Abraham Trostle lane. While Maj. Gen. Andrew A. Humphrey’s 2<sup>nd</sup> Division connected to Graham’s right, his left was dangerously unsupported.<sup>40</sup>

This problem arose from Sickles’ forward movement. While his advanced line gained the numerous advantages offered by the terrain, it had several major flaws. One of these was that Sickles had overextended himself to the point of leaving gaps in his new line. One of the largest was a 400-yard opening along the Wheatfield road between the Peach Orchard and the Stony Hill, directly behind Graham’s front. To partially cover this gap and provide support to the infantry, Capt. A. Judson Clark’s Battery B, 1<sup>st</sup> New Jersey Artillery was placed on the eastern slope of the Peach Orchard Knoll, northeast of the Peach Orchard, with his guns facing south. Further supporting Graham’s line was Lt. John Bucklyn’s Battery E, 1<sup>st</sup> Rhode Island Artillery, positioned directly north of the Wentz farmstead along the Emmitsburg road, fronting west.<sup>41</sup> Wanting to take advantage of Peach Orchard area as an artillery platform, Sickles was later authorized to call for additional batteries from the army’s Artillery Reserve. As those guns were ordered to the front, Bucklyn’s and Clark’s batteries began to deliver their fire on Longstreet’s rapidly deploying lines along Warfield Ridge.<sup>42</sup>

Major General McLaws recalled these opening shots, writing, “The head of my column soon reached the edge of the woods, and ... before us [was] a vast body of Federal troops ... supported by numerous artillery, the guns of which opened on the head of my column so soon as it appeared.” Riding to the front in reaction to this fire, McLaws was stunned by the sight that greeted him:

... one rapid glance showed them to be in force much greater than I had, and extending considerably beyond my right. My command, therefore, instead of marching on as directed ... deployed at once .

As the lead elements of his column filed off to the right, under cover of the walls and trees along the ridge’s crest, McLaws examined the Union position in more detail:

While this was going on I ... took a good look at the situation, and the view presented astonished me, as the enemy was massed in my front, and extended to my right and left as far as I could see. ... Thus was presented a state of affairs which was certainly not contemplated when the original plan or order of battle was given.<sup>43</sup>

As McLaws arranged his brigades for action, and even before he could fully comprehend these unexpected circumstances, messengers from Longstreet arrived ordering an immediate attack. Having not yet seen the new Union line, Longstreet was obviously unaware of the difficulties McLaws faced.<sup>44</sup>

Once he actually saw the situation first-hand, however, Longstreet immediately recognized that he was not beyond the Union flank. Reacting quickly he rescinded the attack orders while at the same time directed Hood to move beyond McLaws' right, in an attempt to outflank the Union left. Longstreet also changed the plan of attack at this time, ordering Hood's division to advance first, followed by McLaws' division. While this decision retained the en echelon style of attack called for in Lee's original plan, it reversed the order of attack, which had McLaws stepping off first, to be followed by Hood.<sup>45</sup>

Another alteration Longstreet made was to launch the en echelon attack by brigades, instead of by divisions. Thus this rolling attack would strike Devil's Den and Little Round Top first and then progress northward along Sickles' front. This type of assault was designed to create a weak point in the Union line and cause confusion within its ranks. Both of these would hopefully happen when Union commanders, such as Sickles, would react by shifting troops from their center and right, to the extreme left. This shifting would break up Union formations, cause confusion, and weaken other segments of the Union line. As the Confederate attack grew in size it would eventually find and exploit these vulnerable points.

While the jumping-off point and sequence of advance had changed, the principal idea of assault remained the same, as Longstreet recalled Lee's orders: "to envelop the enemy's left, and begin the attack there, following ... as near as possible, the direction of the Emmetsburg road." For McLaws' brigades, being located directly west of the Peach Orchard, this meant that they would first have to attack and capture that all-important terrain before advancing northward along the Emmitsburg road. According to Col. Benjamin G. Humphreys, 21<sup>st</sup> Mississippi, they were to advance with the "general order 'to swing to the left,' – still hoping that we were on the enemies left flank – and thus be in a position to drive in that flank, and push them towards Gettysburg."<sup>46</sup> Brig. Gen. Joseph B. Kershaw, commanding a brigade of South Carolinians in McLaws' division, confirmed this order, later writing, "The directions were 'to ... wheel to the left ...' I understood it to mean that we were to swing around as we could, towards the left ... with a view of gaining ... the Peach orchard on the left."<sup>47</sup> Before this attack could begin, however, the men of McLaws' division had to await the advance of all of Hood's division off to their right.

McLaws formed his four brigades in a double line of battle, with "[Brig. Gen. Joseph] Kershaw on the right, [Brig. Gen. William] Barksdale on the left, [Brig. Ben. Paul] Semmes in rear of Kershaw, [Brig. Gen. William] Wofford in the rear of Barksdale." Thus each of the front brigades had a supporting brigade to its rear. While there is no hard proof, Longstreet probably dictated this formation, for it was used in Hood's division as well.<sup>48</sup> As Longstreet made the final arrangement for his attack the battle began to grow in size and intensity as Union and Confederate artillery batteries opened fire. Not surprisingly, the Peach Orchard area, being an excellent artillery platform, would be involved in these opening shots. As stated earlier, one of the first batteries to open fire was Capt. Judson Clark's Battery B, 1<sup>st</sup> New Jersey. Facing south they spotted Hood's division deploying along Warfield Ridge. Clark reported:

... the enemy's infantry was discovered passing in columns across the Emmitsburg road to our left and front, and distant about 1,400 yards ... I ...

opened fire upon their position, using shell and case shot, firing very slowly and apparently with good effect ...<sup>49</sup>

Confederate batteries, deploying along Warfield Ridge, also drew Union artillery fire. Capt. B. C. Manly, commanding Battery A, 1<sup>st</sup> North Carolina reported, "When we arrived within a few hundred yards of the cross-roads [at the Peach Orchard] ... we discovered that the enemy held it with a large force of infantry and artillery, which opened upon us immediately." These Southern batteries were quick to respond, thus beginning what became, according to one Confederate artillery officer, "one of the severest artillery fires ... [of] the war."<sup>50</sup>

Drawn by this growing fire, General Meade rode toward his left to investigate, and it was at this point that he discovered "that General Sickles had taken up a position very much in advance of what it had been my intention that he should take...." Probably stunned, he found the 3<sup>rd</sup> Corps commander near the Peach Orchard where, in the midst of the growing artillery exchange, the two generals had a short conversation. According to Meade, he told Sickles that the forward line "was not the position I had expected him to take [and] that he had advanced his line beyond the support of my army...."<sup>51</sup>

Sickles remembered that:

General Meade ... arrived on the field and made a rapid examination of the dispositions which I had made, and ... remarked ... that my line was too extended, and expressed his doubts as to my being able to hold so extended a line....

Although Sickles responded that it was his belief that "if supported, the line could be held," he also stated that "it was not yet too late" to withdraw his corps "to ... any position [Meade] might indicate." The commanding general was probably tempted by this offer, for he stated "You could see the ridge [Cemetery Ridge] by turning around, which I had intended him to take," but he told Sickles "that the enemy would not permit him to withdraw, and that there was no time for any further change or movement." Realizing that he had "to fight the battle out there where he [Sickles] was," Meade also instantly understood he would have to throw reinforcements into the battle as rapidly as possible in an attempt to shore up the 3<sup>rd</sup> Corps' overextended line.<sup>52</sup>

The Army of the Potomac's only reserve was the 5<sup>th</sup> Corps, which Meade quickly ordered to move to his left. At the same time Meade authorized Sickles "to send to General Hunt, who commanded the reserve of the artillery, for as much artillery" as he needed. As the Peach Orchard Knoll and Emmitsburg Road Ridge provided excellent locations for artillery, Sickles attempted to use them to his best advantage. Luckily, General Hunt was already in the area and he immediately ordered up several batteries from the Artillery Reserve.<sup>53</sup>

The Artillery Reserve consisted of 21 batteries, totaling 114 cannon, all organized into five artillery brigades. Civil War artillery, though obsolete by modern standards, could be very effective if used properly. This was especially true when the guns could be concentrated in order to hold a defensive position, something the Artillery Reserve could do efficiently and rapidly. Not only was the ground on the Peach Orchard Knoll perfect for artillery (being smooth and fairly level), but it was also large enough to allow for the concentration of numerous batteries.<sup>54</sup>

Until those guns reached the front, however, Clark's and Bucklyn's batteries stood alone. During the initial stages of the cannonade in and around the Peach Orchard the Confederate artillery seemingly held all of the advantages. Commanding these batteries was Col. E. P. Alexander, who later wrote:

Hood ... first moved out to cross the Emmitsburg Pike and attack Sickles's left flank.... [Maj. M.W.] Henry's battalion moved out with him, & they were both heavily opened on by the enemy's artillery from the Peach Orchard.... To help them out I immediately put in [Col. H. C.] Cabell's whole 18 guns, as one

battery, from the edge of the woods about 700 yards from the Peach Orchard, & then, selecting 18 of my own 26, I put them in action at the nearest point, Warfield's house, where McLaw's line was within 500 yards of the Peach Orchard. This gave me 54 guns in action — all I had except 8 rifles, which I held for awhile as a reserve.<sup>55</sup>

Henry's battalion consisted of two batteries totaling eleven guns. These were Capt. A. C. Latham's Branch (North Carolina) Artillery and Capt. James Reilly's Rowan (North Carolina) Artillery, both of which were located along the southern extension of Warfield Ridge, south of the Emmitsburg road.<sup>56</sup> Colonel Cabell's battalion had four batteries with sixteen guns (not the eighteen guns that Alexander stated) and were located between 500 and 700 yards southwest of the Peach Orchard along the crest of Warfield Ridge. Capt. J. C. Fraser's Pulaski's (Georgia) Artillery was positioned on the right end of the line, followed by the batteries of Capt. E. S. McCarthy's 1<sup>st</sup> Richmond Howitzers, Capt. H. H. Carlton's Troup (Georgia) Artillery and Battery A, 1<sup>st</sup> North Carolina Artillery, commanded by Capt. B. C. Manly. Lastly, Alexander deployed four of the six batteries belonging to his battalion, temporarily commanded Maj. Frank Huger. From south to north these were: Capt. W. W. Parker's Virginia Battery, Capt. O. B. Taylor's Virginia Battery, Capt. George V. Moody's Madison (Louisiana) Light Artillery, and Capt. S. C. Gilbert's Brooks (South Carolina) Artillery. These



*Col. Edward P. Alexander. NA*

guns were located 500 to 600 yards west and slightly southwest of the Peach Orchard and straddling the Millerstown road. As Alexander stated above, he chose to keep the other two batteries of his battalion in reserve.<sup>57</sup>

Thus, Alexander had a total of between 41 and 43 guns in action, not 54, as he stated years later.<sup>58</sup> Even still, during the early stages of the cannonade in and around the Peach Orchard, the Southern artillery had the Union defenders greatly outnumbered. That and some other factors gave Alexander great confidence that his guns could overpower and smother Union resistance:

Now the weakest part of Sickles's line was the angle at the Peach Orchard ... it was nearest, & time was of great importance for it was late in the afternoon.... I had hoped, with my [41] guns & close range, to make it short, sharp, & decisive. At close ranges there was less inequality in our guns & especially our ammunition, & I thought that if ever I could overwhelm & crush them I would do it now.<sup>59</sup>

Alexander, however, was in for a rude surprise:

... they [Union artillery] really surprised me, both with the number of guns they developed, & they way they stuck to them. I don't think there was ever in our war a hotter, harder, sharper artillery afternoon than this.<sup>60</sup>

Part of this stiff Union resistance came from the stubbornness and discipline of the crews in Clark's and Bucklyn's batteries. One of Clark's men later wrote:



The Battery opened with shell and case shot, firing slowly, first by gun, next by section, then by half battery, and once or twice by battery. The Captain gave every order in a clear, ringing voice that could be heard above the roar of battle. He passed from gun to gun directing the fire of each, character of missile and time of fuse. As soon as he was satisfied with effect of battery fire he gave the order, "Fire at will," and from that moment our six Parrot guns poured a stream of shell and shrapnel into the enemy's batteries.... Three minutes after going into action Tom Post's head was shot off, and the horses became very restless under the enemy's artillery fire.... In less than thirty minutes the enemy's fire slackened, one of their limbers blew up ... Billy Riley jumped astraddle of [a] gun and began cheering. The cheer was taken up by the infantry and followed the line to right and left....<sup>61</sup>

Another factor assisting the Union defense was the arrival of the additional batteries which had been ordered up from the Artillery Reserve. One of the first of these to arrive was Battery G, 1<sup>st</sup> New York, commanded by Capt. Nelson Ames, who reported:

Captain [George] Randolph, chief of artillery Third Army Corps, ordered me to move forward ... [and] take position in a thick peach orchard.... I immediately moved forward, and, while crossing a cleared field, the enemy opened fire.... They got an excellent range ... nearly all of their shot striking in my battery, but fortunately they did no other damage than killing two horses.

Despite this fire the battery arrived in the orchard and "as soon as positions were indicated the guns were quickly in operation, the [crews] ... having been ordered to open fire at once." Ames directed this reply fire against the Confederate batteries to both the southwest and west.<sup>62</sup>

Following closely after Ames was the 1<sup>st</sup> Volunteer Brigade, Artillery Reserve, commanded by Lt. Col. Freeman McGilvery, consisting of four batteries and totaling 22 guns. Upon reporting to Sickles near the Abraham Trostle farm, McGilvery was told to examine the ground and place his batteries as he saw fit. Quickly scouting the front, McGilvery placed his batteries in and to the east of the Peach Orchard, along the left center of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Corps line. Three of his batteries were actually placed in the 400-yard gap along the Wheatfield road, between the Peach Orchard and the Stony Hill. Once positioned the batteries were, from left to right, Capt. John Bigelow's 9<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts, Capt. Charles Phillips' 5<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts, Clark's New Jersey battery (already in place), Capt. Patrick Hart's 15<sup>th</sup> New York, and Capt. James Thompson's Batteries C&F, 1<sup>st</sup> Pennsylvania. Thompson's battery was split, with four of his guns in the Peach Orchard facing south, and the other two guns positioned along the Emmitsburg road, between the Sherfy house and barn, facing west. McGilvery's batteries went into position while under fire and quickly readied for action. The artillery line covering the gap formed an impressive sight, twenty-six cannons and their crews, with all the necessary equipment and hundreds of horses positioned behind the guns, dueling with Confederate artillery nearly a mile away.<sup>63</sup>

McGilvery ordered this deployment for two reasons. First, and most importantly, the ground was not only ideal for artillery but also provided his batteries with excellent unobstructed fields of fire. McGilvery reported that "this position ... commanded most of the open country between the woods held by our troops on the left [Rose Woods and Stony Hill] and high ground occupied by the enemy on [the] right [Warfield Ridge]." It also meant that any Confederate infantry which advanced toward the Union left (at Little Round Top, Devil's Den, and the Wheatfield) would be subject to a devastating raking fire along the entire length of their line from McGilvery's guns.<sup>64</sup>

The second reason McGilvery placed his batteries along the Wheatfield road was to cover the dangerous gap in the Union line. Although it was critically important to do so, McGilvery's decision forced him to break a basic rule of artillery tactics. Because Civil War artillery used

direct fire, it had to be placed on the front line, thus making it vulnerable to capture. The *Artillerist's Manual* of 1859 states, "Artillery cannot defend itself when hard pressed, and should always be sustained by ... infantry." McGilvery's batteries, however, had no support and could only hope they never would be "hard pressed." McGilvery himself was probably willing to take the risk, at least initially, in the hope that supports would become available as reinforcements arrived.<sup>65</sup>

This last point became critically important later, when the Peach Orchard area came under infantry attack. While the Union batteries positioned in the orchards (Hart, Thompson, Ames, and Bucklyn) had infantry support, the batteries along the Wheatfield road (Clark, Phillips, and Bigelow) did not. As will be seen later, the importance of proper infantry support, or lack thereof, became painfully obvious.

Upon going into position, however, McGilvery did not have time to worry about possible support. His attention had to be completely occupied on the raging artillery duel he had marched into, and which continued to build in size. As discussed earlier, officers on both sides recognized the Peach Orchard Knoll as an ideal platform for artillery. Not surprisingly, therefore, the number of cannon concentrated in this area was impressive. With Alexander's forty-one guns thundering away from the south, southwest, and west, and Union officers eventually concentrating forty cannons on and around the Peach Orchard Knoll, the combined total was more than eighty. Charles W. Reed, the bugler of the 9<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Battery, attempted to describe the overwhelming noise these guns produced:

... such a shrieking, hissing, seathing I never dreamed was imagineable. it seemed as though it must be the work of the very devil himself. their fire about this time was tremendous[.] there were five Batterys of us in a line ours on the left besides other artillery in different positions the roar of which was deafening....<sup>66</sup>

Not surprisingly, the Peach Orchard became focal point of this struggle as both officers and men in each army realized its importance. Capt. Ames later described this, writing:

It was evidently the intention of the enemy to concentrate fire on our position in order, if possible, to silence our guns or drive us from the place we had assumed, but it was just as evidently the intention of our men to stay where they were and work from that point, for both sides realized that whoever held or could hold our place [the Peach Orchard], held the key to the entire situation.<sup>67</sup>

Artillerymen on both sides later attested to the fierceness of this barrage. A member of Clark's battery described the scene:

About 4 o'clock a spherical case shot exploded to right of first caisson, killing one horse and filling flanks of leader and shoulder of off pole horses with bullets. A fragment of shell disemboweled the nigh pole horse; another took off his fore leg. I was holding him by the bridle; the team started to run...dragging horse and me fifty yards to rear.<sup>68</sup>

A member of Capt. Carlton's Troup (Georgia) battery wrote home:

The firing was the most rapid I have ever witnessed, and the earth literally vibrated under the continuous roar...the fight raged without a moment's cessation.... I have never seen guns better served, and right in the center of the battalion, working like beavers and covered with dust and smoke, were Carlton's

brave boys...cool and calm.... The Yankee dead lay thick around their guns, and dead and wounded horses literally covered the ground.<sup>69</sup>

Col. H. C. Cabell reported:

The battalion, being first to open fire, received for a short time a concentrated fire from the enemy's batteries. The fire from our lines and from the enemy became incessant, rendering it necessary for us sometimes to pause and allow the smoke to clear away, in order to enable the gunners to take aim.<sup>70</sup>

Colonel Alexander later wrote:

...I have written [before]...that "Sharpsburg was artillery hell." Well, at Sharpsburg the casualties of the 6 batteries in the battalion were...about 85 men [and] 60 horses; [at] Gettysburg, 144 men [and] 116 horses, two thirds in this afternoon. Gilbert's (Rhett's) battery of 4 guns had two fairly struck by the enemy's shot & dismounted. Of less than 75 men in action he had 40 killed & wounded, an unusual proportion of the wounds of the wounds...being...severe...Gilbert's were almost all by artillery fire. Within a half hour after beginning, Capt. Moody reported that he was short of force to handle his 24 pr. howitzers...& asked permission to try & borrow some volunteers from Barksdale's Miss. brigade lying close in our rear...we soon got 8 fine fellows. Five of the 8 that night were dead or severely wounded.<sup>71</sup>

Despite the losses, Alexander was initially confident he could achieve a quick and decisive victory. One reason for this was the arrangement of the respective battle lines, which revealed a second major flaw in Sickles' advanced line. The Confederate line was slightly concave, thus allowing Alexander's batteries to deliver a converging fire on the Peach Orchard area from the south, southwest, and west. Conversely, the Union line was convex, with a heavy concentration of its batteries being centrally located in and around the Peach Orchard. This resulted in not only a dense target for incoming Confederate fire, but also forced the Union batteries to disperse their fire outward, thus weakening its effectiveness.

This arrangement of the battle lines also led to another problem for Union batteries and illustrated the third significant defect in Sickles' line. Because the 3<sup>rd</sup> Corps line faced two directions, south and west, Southern batteries were able to deliver an enfilading or flanking fire along both of its wings. The soldiers who would pay the price for Sickles' mistake were the artillerymen, to whom the shortcomings of their position were starkly evident.

A member of Bucklyn's battery, stationed along the Emmitsburg road and facing west, recalled the Confederate fire from the south:

It was not only from the fire of the batteries in our front that we suffered, but the shots of those batteries which were firing upon the south front of the Peach Orchard passed through our battery.<sup>72</sup>

Lt. Benjamin Freeborn, commanding one of the battery's sections, reported that "the enemy's guns...soon opened fire from different points, and, owing to the peculiar formation of the line, we were at times exposed to a heavy cross-fire."<sup>73</sup>

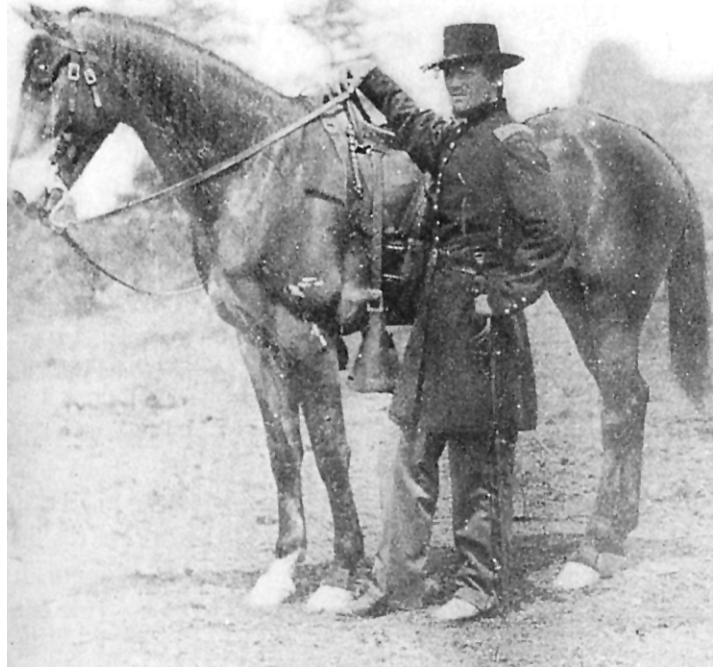
The Union batteries in the Peach Orchard and along the Wheatfield road experienced this same problem. Facing south, these batteries were subjected to a flanking fire from their right. A member of the 9<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Battery recalled this fire, writing, "some new Batterys opened on us a cross fire with shell and solid shot[.] their fire about this time was tremendous." More

than likely this fire was overshoots from the batteries of Moody and Gilbert, approximately 600 yards west of the Peach Orchard. McGilvery reported this “enfilade fire...was inflicting serious damage through the whole line of my command.” Capt. Charles Phillips, 5<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Battery, remembered Confederate batteries “on our right, hidden from us by the rising ground and the Peach orchard which enfiladed our line and distributed...amongst us the shells intended for Thompson’s battery....”<sup>74</sup> For McGilvery’s artillerymen, instinctively working their guns, this crossfire was especially frustrating, for they could do nothing to stop or even react to it. Despite these disadvantages the Union gunners stuck to their pieces and kept up a steady fire.

As this cannonade continued unabated McGilvery’s hope for infantry support began to dim. The principle reason was that at around 4 P.M. Longstreet ordered his en echelon attack to begin. By the time Union batteries from the Artillery Reserve arrived at the Peach Orchard, Hood’s troops had already struck the Union left at Little Round Top and Devil’s Den. What this meant, of course, was that nearly all of the reinforcements sent by Meade to bolster the 3<sup>rd</sup> Corps’ line went to those areas under attack. Thus Longstreet’s en echelon attack worked by drawing Union troops to their left and leaving other sectors along Sickles’ line, such as McGilvery’s batteries, without support.<sup>75</sup>

This staggered attack also had the additional benefit of causing Sickles to shift some of his own regiments. A member of Captain Clark’s battery recalled, “The 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> New Jersey regiment[s] marched past our rear in quick time to reinforce our left, where the enemy were driving our troops.” Desperate to shore up his left, Sickles looked to his right, which was then quiet, and ordered Maj. Gen. Andrew A. Humphreys to send a brigade to support Birney’s division. Humphreys’ only reserve was Col. George Burling’s brigade, consisting of six regiments and numbering approximately 1,365 men. Burling watched helplessly as his regiments were taken from his command and parceled out along the 3<sup>rd</sup> Corps’ left and center. The 6<sup>th</sup> New Jersey fought in the Valley of Death while the 8<sup>th</sup> New Jersey and 115<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania ended up in the Wheatfield. Thus Humphreys’ division lost a third of its strength before it had even fired a shot.<sup>76</sup> The last two regiments of Burling’s brigade, the 2<sup>nd</sup> New Hampshire and 7<sup>th</sup> New Jersey, ended up in or near the Peach Orchard, as will be discussed later.

Slowly Longstreet’s attacks spread northward as he released more of his brigades into action. At around 5 P.M., Brig. Gen. George T. Anderson’s Georgia brigade stepped off of Warfield Ridge and began its advance toward the Wheatfield, directly across the front of the Union batteries in the Peach Orchard and McGilvery’s guns along the Wheatfield road. As described



*Captain Charles Phillips, 5<sup>th</sup> Mass. Battery. Appleton, History of the Fifth Massachusetts Battery*

earlier, these batteries were perfectly positioned to deliver a heavy enfilading fire along Anderson's entire line. McGilvery reported the impact of this fire:

At about 5 o'clock a heavy column of rebel infantry made its appearance in a grain-field about 850 yards in front, moving at quick time toward the woods on our left, where the infantry fighting was then going on. A well-directed fire from all the batteries was brought to bear upon them, which destroyed the order of their march...though the main portion of the column succeeded in reaching the point for which they started....<sup>77</sup>

Captain Ames, in the orchard itself, later recalled these moments:

The writer remembers with what curious feelings he watched the enemy massing their forces in heavy lines...preparing to make a charge.... One could never forget the magnificent manner in which they moved out of the timber and deployed to charge across the open field in order to reach our line of battle, which had been formed in the woods on our left. As they marched out into the clear opening, the...guns...were turned upon the enemy's infantry...doing the best execution possible. Every shot they fired tore its way through the enemy's ranks. Huge gaps were clearly seen but were filled up quickly by the living, who moved grandly forward.<sup>78</sup>

One of Anderson's Georgia soldiers reported that his regiment "while advancing nearly the distance of a mile [was] very much exposed to an enfilading fire of the enemy's batteries...." Another recalled the "severe enfilading fire of the enemy's batteries upon Cemetery Hill [Peach Orchard Knoll]...."<sup>79</sup> Despite this fire Anderson's brigade reached Rose Woods and soon brought the Union line in the Wheatfield under attack.

Anderson's advance must have been an ominous sign for the Union soldiers placed in and around the Peach Orchard for they must have sensed the fighting was spreading in their direction. For most of the Union artillery crews, however, their focus and discipline were concentrated on serving their guns, one later writing:

There was a continuous roar of firing from muskets and an occasional addition from the artillery, but we who were at the peach orchard had no time to distinguish sounds or listen to anything taking place on the right or on the left. Our duty was to observe conditions immediately in front of us.<sup>80</sup>

While McGilvery's batteries on Wheatfield road had no infantry support, those positioned in the Peach Orchard area did. Yet all these supporting infantrymen could do was wait out this horrible ordeal. A member of the 114<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania, located behind Captain Bucklyn's battery and near the Sherfy farmstead, remembered these trying moments:

...the enemy opened on us the concentrated fire of his batteries and immediately we were in the midst of a terrific shower of shot and shell, and every conceivable kind of missile, which made terrible havoc among us...we had nothing to do but remain in our position, having no protection of any sort or kind, and our position affording us none, we threw ourselves upon the ground, and for upwards of two hours passively endured the terrible ordeal, while death and destruction was being dealt among us. None of the various duties which a soldier is called upon to perform, and none of the various vicissitudes and dangers that he is expected to face, call for such bravery and endurance, as thus remaining passive under an

enemy's artillery fire that has got an accurate range, and from which there is no protection.<sup>81</sup>

This same experience was occurring amongst the Confederate infantry, who anxiously awaited the order to move forward. J. S. McNeily of Barksdale's brigade recalled:

While waiting their turn, Barksdale's men lay under fire of artillery...in their front, which they were not allowed to return for an hour or more. Where they were well covered the casualties were few; but where the line was exposed the punishment was severe. The severest of all tests on troops, to receive fire without returning it, was borne unflinchingly.<sup>82</sup>

J.B. Booth, in the 21<sup>st</sup> Mississippi, later wrote:

I remember vividly the effects of the first shot that came from the battery in our front.... The shell exploded in the ranks of my company, near me. J. T. Worley was killed and Capt. H. H. Simmons, John H. Thompson and John T. Neely each lost a leg.... By the same shot, there were other casualties....<sup>83</sup>

In the Peach Orchard itself Col. Edward Bailey, the 21-year old commander of the 2<sup>nd</sup> New Hampshire, attempted to steady his men, reporting, "At 4 o'clock, while experiencing a terrific fire of spherical case and canister from batteries in my front and on my right...I directed the rolls of my companies to be called...."<sup>84</sup>

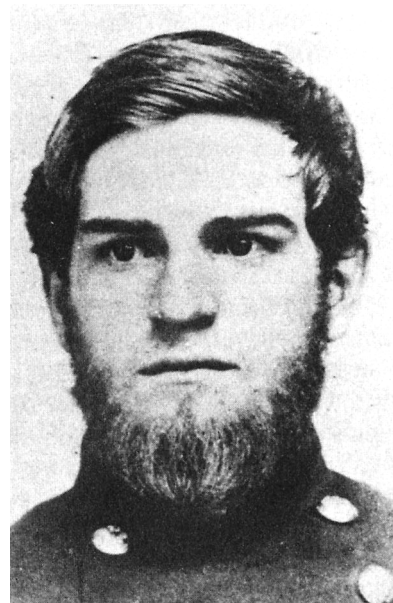
While powerless to stop the pounding they were subjected too, these Union infantrymen not only recognized the importance of the position they held, but also readily saw its numerous flaws. One of the most obvious was that being a salient, the Peach Orchard could be attacked from two directions; south and west. As noted earlier, it was Brig. Gen. Charles Graham's brigade which was assigned the difficult task of defending this position, one that Graham himself described as "the salient and most advanced post of the army."<sup>85</sup>

The brigade numbered approximately 1,500 men and consisted of six Pennsylvania regiments (the 57<sup>th</sup>, 63<sup>rd</sup>, 68<sup>th</sup>, 105<sup>th</sup>, 114<sup>th</sup>, and 141<sup>st</sup>). Graham placed four of his regiments along the Emmitsburg road, facing west, between the Peach Orchard and the Trostle farm lane.

From left to right they were the 68<sup>th</sup>, 114<sup>th</sup>, 57<sup>th</sup>, and 105<sup>th</sup>

Pennsylvania. These four regiments thus covered a front of approximately 500 yards with around 1,060 officers and men. This line was bolstered by two batteries that flanked the road intersection: Captain Ames' G, 1<sup>st</sup> New York to the south and Captain Bucklyn's E, 1<sup>st</sup> Rhode Island to the north. Two guns of Captain Thompson's battery were also positioned along this line, at the Sherfy farmstead.<sup>86</sup>

In an attempt to cover the south face of this angle, Thompson's four remaining guns, along with Captain Hart's four gun battery, were placed in the Peach Orchard and the George Rose apple orchard, respectively. To support these batteries and partially cover the dangerous gap to his left rear, Graham placed the 141<sup>st</sup> Pennsylvania, approximately 210 strong, in the Sherfy's younger peach orchard north of the Wheatfield road. Graham had earlier ordered the entire 63<sup>rd</sup>



Col. Edmund Bailey.  
MOLLUS-Mass., USAMHI

Pennsylvania out to the skirmish line west of the Emmitsburg road. It was later withdrawn, leaving Graham with an approximate strength of 1,250.<sup>87</sup>

Apparently sensing the vulnerability of the Peach Orchard, Maj. Gen. David Birney sent Graham support in the form of two regiments from Colonel Burling's brigade. Graham directed



*Brig. Gen. Charles K. Graham. NA*

the 2<sup>nd</sup> New Hampshire (approximately 350 strong) "to be placed" along the Wheatfield road "in immediate support of Ames' New York battery," facing south. Company B was then "detached...and stationed...about the Wentz buildings, a one-story wood farm house and two or three small outbuildings" and faced to the west. Graham ordered the 7<sup>th</sup> New Jersey (approximately 275 officers and men) behind and in support of Captain Clark's guns.<sup>88</sup>

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Maine also fought along Graham's front that afternoon. The regiment, detached earlier from Brig. Gen. Hobart Ward's brigade, was ordered into position by Birney and fought somewhat independently as skirmishers south and southeast of the orchard. Its approximately 210 officers and men thus brought the total Union strength in the immediate vicinity of the Peach Orchard to around 2,200 men. This included approximately 1,835 infantry and four batteries of artillery (Hart, Thompson, Ames, and Bucklyn) totaling twenty-two guns, all served by nearly 370 men.<sup>89</sup>

As the battle continued unabated to their left, at Little Round Top, Devil's Den, and the Wheatfield, the Union officers and men around the Peach Orchard were still subject to the heavy Confederate shelling described earlier. By this point the fury of the battle was overwhelming. A member of the Battery B, 1<sup>st</sup> New

Jersey, who was returning from filling canteens near the Trostle farmstead, provided a vivid description of the struggle, writing:

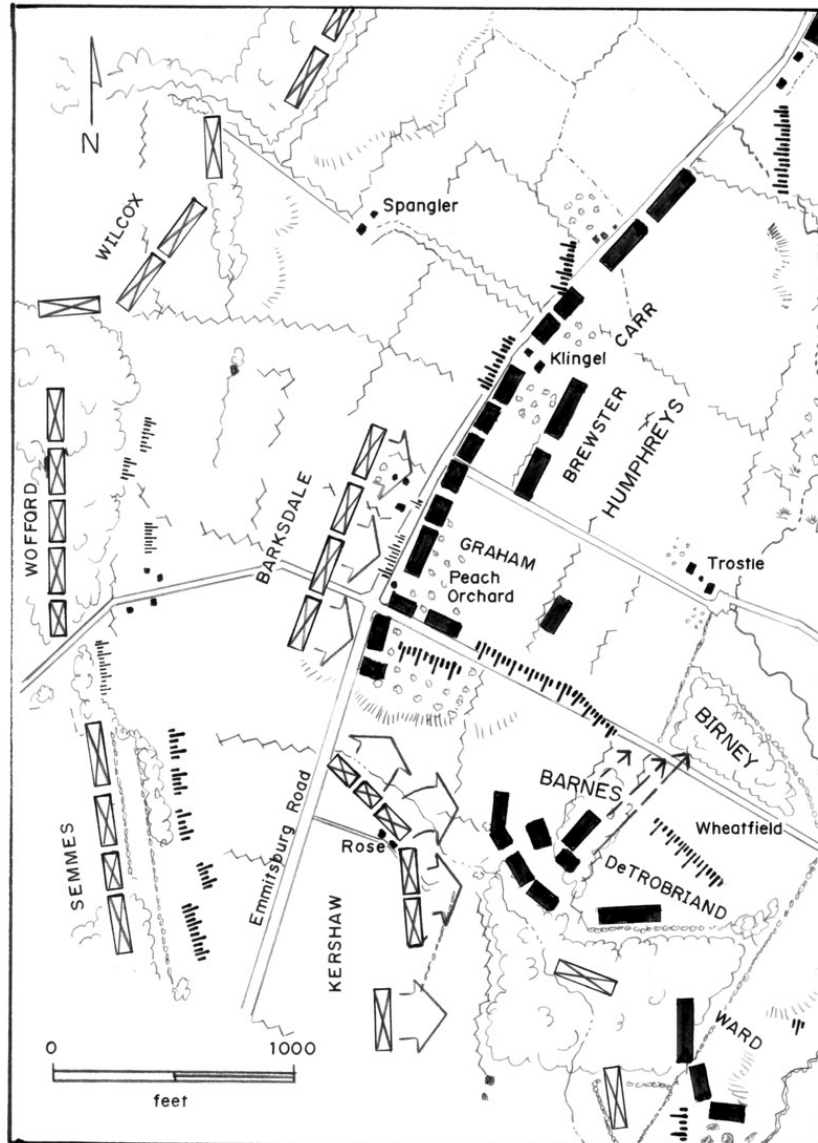
A grand but terrible picture met my view. On the [Wheatfield] road, near by, the Fifth Corps was marching to the left. Our left and front was a sheet of flame. The air was dotted with little balloons of white smoke, showing where shells had burst, and sent their deadly messengers to the fighting lines below. From Longstreet's right, all along to our right as far as one could see, the enemy's artillery was actively engaged, as shown by the white steam-like clouds of smoke arising from their battery positions. To the left I could see the enemy driving...up the sides of Little Round Top....<sup>90</sup>

At around 5:30 P.M. the intensity of the artillery fire around the Peach Orchard seemed to increase. Union infantry positioned there sensed that events were taking an ominous turn for the worse, as a member of the 2<sup>nd</sup> New Hampshire recalled:

...it was apparent the crisis was near...the rebel artillery opened a terrific concentric fire upon that doomed angle. The veterans of the Second, who had learned to read the signs, knew there was an infantry assault behind all that hubbub.... Now every gun upon that great outer circle seemed to concentrate its fire upon that little acre about the Wentz house.... It was...under cover of the

artillery fire, the long-concealed infantry of McLaws' rebel division disclosed itself and moved forward....<sup>91</sup>

With all of Hood's division now engaged, the time had finally arrived for Major General McLaws' division to move forward. Not surprisingly, many of his men had been anxiously awaiting the order to advance throughout their long and frustrating ordeal under fire. One of the most impatient was Brig. Gen. William Barksdale, who had a "forward, impetuous bearing." McLaws later wrote that while under fire "Gen. Barksdale two or three times came to me and said, "General, let me go, General; let me charge."<sup>92</sup>



*Kershaw's brigade strikes the southern flank of the Peach Orchard.*

According to Brig. Gen. Joseph Kershaw, the plan of attack, as explained to him by both Longstreet and McLaws, was "that Barksdale would move with me and conform to my



movement; that Semmes would follow me, and Wofford follow Barksdale.” Thus McLaws’ entire division was to advance simultaneously.<sup>93</sup>

Kershaw later described his advance:

...the men leaped over the wall and were promptly aligned; the word was given, and the brigade moved off...with great steadiness and precision, followed by Semmes with equal promptness. General Longstreet accompanied me in this advance on foot, as far as the Emmitsburg road. All the field and staff officers were dismounted on account of the many obstacles in the way. When we were about the Emmitsburg road, I heard Barksdale’s drums beat the assembly, and knew then that I should have no immediate support on my left...<sup>94</sup>

The delay of Barksdale’s brigade is somewhat surprising, considering his earlier impatience and numerous requests to attack. Kershaw’s account quoted above seems to indicate that Barksdale’s regiments had simply not been ready to move when the order arrived. A more plausible explanation was given by McLaws who wrote that “Barksdale, and Wofford...had been mixed up with the batteries which had been placed among their lines, and were temporarily delayed in extricating themselves therefrom.”<sup>95</sup>

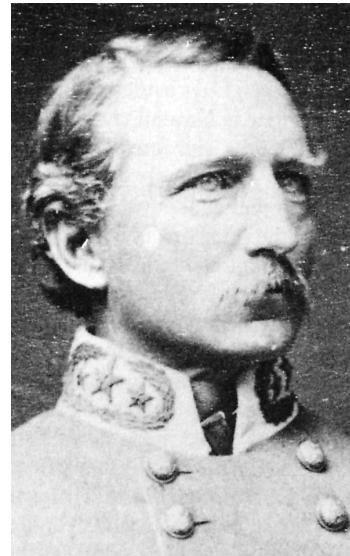
Whatever the reason, this delay had a serious impact on Kershaw’s regiments. As the direction of the brigade’s advance was toward the George Rose farmstead, its left wing (from left to right, 8th South Carolina, 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, and 2<sup>nd</sup> South Carolina) passed just south of the Peach Orchard, and thus Kershaw recalled, had presented their left flank “squarely...to the heavy force of infantry and artillery at and in the rear of the Peach Orchard.” The latter referred to the Union batteries along the Wheatfield road, who delivered a devastating raking fire.<sup>96</sup>

Commanding most of this artillery was, of course, Lt. Col. Freeman McGilvery, who later wrote:

I immediately trained the entire line of our guns upon them, and opened with various kinds of ammunition. The column continued to move on at double-quick until its head reached a barn and farm-house immediately in front of my left battery.... I gave them canister and solid shot with good effect that I am sure that several hundred were put *hors de combat* in a short space of time....<sup>97</sup>

Kershaw, who proudly recalled that these regiments had moved “majestically across the fields...with the steadiness of troops on parade,” now reported this “raking fire of grape and canister rendered it difficult to retain the line in good order...” One South Carolinian later described the havoc produced by this canister fire, writing, “You could constantly see men falling on all sides and the terrible missiles of death were flying thick and fast everywhere, cutting off large trees and plowing up the ground...” Another vividly remembered that, “O the awful deathly surging sounds of those little black balls as they flew by us, through us, between our legs, and over us! Many of course were struck down...”<sup>98</sup> Following 150 yards behind Kershaw’s line were the four Georgia regiments of Semmes’ brigade, who faced this same fire.<sup>99</sup>

As Kershaw’s left wing passed through the ravine located just south of the Peach Orchard they soon found themselves facing another threat: Union infantry. A member of the 2<sup>nd</sup> New Hampshire described how this occurred:



Brig. Gen. Joseph B. Kershaw.  
MOLLUS-Mass., USAMHI

Col. Bailey, while taking a view from a point of observation near the Emmitsburg road, noted the rapid advance of a column of massed battalions. He watched it just long enough to determine that it was a genuine column of attack, with no skirmishers thrown forward, and that it was pushing directly forward for the battery the Second was supporting.... He ran with all speed to General Graham, meeting him some distance to the rear of the Second, gave him warning, and suggested that the Second should charge. "Yes, for God's sake, go forward!" replied Graham. The Second came to their feet with a great sigh of relief. They had begun to chafe in the leash. Despite many casualties, there were probably more than three hundred men still left to "go forward." No time was wasted on frills—only a moment for a hasty alignment.... "*Forward, guide center!*"—and the Second was off.

...with a roar of defiance from three hundred throats the Second went tearing down the slope. They did not have to hunt for the enemy—there he was, right before them. The rebels halted a moment, in dazed surprise at this devil's whirlwind which had been let loose upon them.... On went the Second, in south-west course...through the peach orchard, its right wing out at its angle and partially across the Emmitsburg road. A sharp fire was maintained upon those...rebels, until they reached a little depression in the fields and piled into it, out of sight. There was some difficulty in halting the Second. Its blood was up, and many of the men seemed to think that now was the time to go into Richmond.

Joining this advance to the southern edge of the Peach Orchard were the 3<sup>rd</sup> Maine and 141<sup>st</sup> Pennsylvania, which both moved up shortly after and formed to the left of the 2<sup>nd</sup> New Hampshire.<sup>100</sup>

While Col. Bailey was mistaken about the direction of Kershaw's assault (toward the Rose farmstead, and not the Union batteries located in the Peach Orchard), the advance of these three Union regiments serves as a perfect example of the role that infantry is supposed to play when supporting nearby batteries. This movement gave the batteries in the Peach Orchard (Ames, Thompson, and Hart) more time and space as they began to withdraw. McGilvery's batteries, and Captain Clark's along the Wheatfield road as well, had no support and would soon have to deal with this mistake.

Eventually Kershaw's and Semmes' regiments reached the Rose farmstead. Years later, Kershaw wrote that, "the batteries near the orchard concentrated a terrific fire on us at that point. I well remember the *clatter* of the *grape* [canister] against the wall of the houses we passed." Due to the combined artillery and infantry fire, along with the "walls and fence left of Rose's (house)," Kershaw recalled "that for a short time the left wing halted" evidently to reform its line. Kershaw then ordered it, as per his previous instructions, to "wheel to the left" in order to attack the Peach Orchard from the south.<sup>101</sup>

These batteries along the Wheatfield road, still without support, now faced what they had most feared: an attack by a rapidly advancing and disciplined body of infantry. Making matters worse was the ravine, 400 yards in front of and parallel to the Union guns, which at first partially concealed the Confederate line. Suddenly appearing out of the ravine, Captain Bigelow saw them "extending from the Rose buildings to the Peach Orchard." Somewhat confused, the captain at first "hesitated to open fire on them, fearing they were Sickles' men." Soon seeing a Confederate battle flag, however, Bigelow quickly ordered his gunners to fire, as did all the batteries to his right.<sup>102</sup>

The South Carolinians must have delivered this assault with incredible discipline, for a member of the 5<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Battery recalled that they “could see the rebels fall” yet he also noted “the gaps closed at each discharge.” Kershaw later claimed that this charge by his left wing “moved steadily upon [the batteries] until the gunners left their pieces” and the caissons started to move off. Bigelow wrote that, “thus far in the engagement, we had not seen any of our infantry, we, at first, hesitated to open fire, fearing they were Sickles’ men.” Yet no other evidence supports Kershaw’s claim that the Union gunners had started to abandon their position, let alone their guns.<sup>103</sup>

The South Carolinians closed to within 200 yards, when suddenly their direction of advance shifted to their right, thus moving across and parallel to the front of the Union batteries. This unexpected movement resulted from an order that Kershaw had given the 7<sup>th</sup> South Carolina on his right wing, in its attack on the Stony Hill, but was mistakenly obeyed by his left wing as well. Kershaw later described this, writing:

...the 7<sup>th</sup> Regiment had lapped the 3d [South Carolina]...I ordered the 7<sup>th</sup> to move by the right flank to uncover the 3d Regiment, which was promptly done. It was, no doubt, this movement, observed by some one from the left [wing], that led to the terrible mistake which cost so dearly.<sup>104</sup>



*An 1880's view looking toward the Peach Orchard from the perspective of Kershaw's left wing. The monuments to the 2<sup>nd</sup> New Hampshire, 3<sup>rd</sup> Michigan and 3<sup>rd</sup> Maine can be seen along the southern edge of the orchard. GNMP.*

All of McGilvery's batteries were quick to take advantage, as Captain Bigelow recalled:

...the Battery immediately enfiladed them with a rapid fire of canister, which tore through their ranks and sprinkled the field with their dead and wounded, until they disappeared in the woods on our left, apparently a mob.<sup>105</sup>

Kershaw's description of the result of this mistaken order matches perfectly with Bigelow's account:

The Federal...[batteries] opened on these doomed regiments a raking fire of grape and canister, at short distance, which proved disastrous, and for a time destroyed their usefulness. Hundreds of the bravest and best men of Carolina fell, victims of this fatal blunder.<sup>106</sup>

Broken, these regiments, according to Kershaw, fell back to the scattering of trees located in the low ground northwest of the Stony Hill, where the men “huddled”...in some disorder and I

have no doubt some went back to shelter about Rose's house." A member of Captain Clark's New Jersey battery wrote, "Our canister fire was too much for the charging column.... It threw them in great confusion, and all who were not killed and wounded changed direction to the right...and disappeared, seeking shelter behind the slope of a hill on our left...."<sup>107</sup>

Although this initial Confederate attack against the Peach Orchard line had been repulsed, the situation remained a critical one for the Union defenders. With incredible discipline of their own, Kershaw's men quickly rallied and, according to Captain Bigelow, were "not long in taking revenge." He continued, stating that almost "as soon as the woods were reached, [they] sent a body of sharpshooters against us...." These veteran Confederates stood their ground and, according to one "did what we could to pick off the enemy's gunners." In his official report McGilvery detailed the steadily worsening situation he found himself in:

The asperities of the ground in front of my batteries were such as to enable the enemy's sharpshooters in large numbers to cover themselves within very short range. At about a quarter to 6 o'clock the enemy's infantry gained possession of the woods immediately to the left of my line of batteries.... At this period of action, all of the batteries were exposed to a warm infantry fire....<sup>108</sup>

The Confederates taking "possession of the woods immediately to the left" were the regiments of Kershaw's right wing occupying the Stony Hill and the northwest extension of Rose Woods. This gave them cover and greatly increased the pressure on McGilvery's left, held by the 9<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Battery. Charles Reed, the battery's bugler, wrote, "the Rebs...steadily advanced on us giving us such a shower of small balls that it was dangerous to be safe!" Another member of the battery wrote that "we could hear the bullets pass us[.] finily a man dropt about 6 foot to my right[,] another right behind[.] 6 men were killed within a rod of me...." Captain Bigelow himself recalled, "the enemy...gaining the woods, came up on my left front...pouring in a heavy fire and killing and wounding a number of my men...." Eventually, the South Carolinians got so near that one wrote, "we killed their horses with rifles easily."<sup>109</sup>

All of the Union batteries covering the gap on the Wheatfield road now found themselves in an artilleryman's worst nightmare. Standing alone, they were subjected to enemy artillery fire from both front and flank. Even worse, they were being attacked by a slowly advancing line of skirmishers, concealed by good cover and supported by infantry. Because Civil War artillery had such a slow rate of fire, even the best gun crews could not defend itself from this type of attack without proper support. This lack of support would continue so long as the line to their left was unstable. With the loss of the Stony Hill, the Union line in the Wheatfield began to collapse. Reinforcements sent by Meade were channeled to the most critical areas, and the struggle for the Wheatfield was certainly swallowing its share of these units, thus depriving McGilvery's batteries of much-needed support. A division of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Corps arrived shortly after the fall of the Stony Hill and checked Kershaw's further advance, yet these South Carolinians remained in the woods and fields to McGilvery's left and front.<sup>110</sup>

Despite their desperate situation, the Union gunners continued to doggedly work their pieces. The scope of the battle was nearly overwhelming, as a member of Clark's battery later described:

During this time the front of the Battery was almost a sheet of flame; the men at the guns fairly flew to their work. The guns themselves seemed full of life...how they roared and thundered! Shells of the enemy's guns were shrieking overhead, or throwing up clouds of dust and dirt where they exploded, bullets were zipping from front and flank.... Splinters were flying from gun carriages and wheels. Horses were being killed and wounded, and taken out of harness, as they fell, by their drivers. At every gun were wounded men, many too slight for hospital....

Every one's shirt was soaked with sweat, some with blood. All were grimed with powder smoke, and not a man but kept to his work. Heroes, every one.<sup>111</sup>

While these Union batteries stubbornly held their ground against Kershaw's left wing, the situation soon became critical in the Peach Orchard itself, for a new and more perilous threat emerged. This danger was the delayed advance of the brigades of Barksdale and Wofford, who would take advantage of the greatest weakness of the salient angle: that it could be attacked from two directions. As Kershaw's left wing attacked from the south, Barksdale's and Wofford's brigades advanced against its western face. The Union soldiers located along the southern edge of the orchard, whose focus had been directed against Kershaw's regiments, suddenly became aware of this new danger. A member of the 2<sup>nd</sup> New Hampshire remembered this, writing:

Following the Second's charge (through the orchard), there came for a brief time a lull in the fire of the rebel artillery.... Then came the storm. Every rebel gun was let loose, until the peach orchard seemed to be almost moving in the windage of hurtling metal. Under cover of this tremendous fire the final, decisive assault was made by Barksdale. Formed by battalions in mass in line of battle, his troops swept steadily forward.<sup>112</sup>

Brig. Gen. William Barksdale's four regiments (18<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>, and 21<sup>st</sup> Mississippi, from left to right) numbered approximately 1,600 officers and men made up one of the hardest fighting brigades in the Army of Northern Virginia. Nearly all of them were combat veterans and possessed an extremely high élan, one later noting, "Never was a body of soldiers fuller of the spirit of fight, and the confidence of victory." Two hundred yards to the rear were the approximately 1,400 Georgians of Brig. Gen. William Wofford's brigade. Thus combined, these two brigades numbered around 3,000 officers and men.<sup>113</sup>

After enduring more than two hours of artillery fire, the tension must have been very high in their ranks. "Hood's Brigades, one after another, moved forward, amid the roar of cannon and rattle of rifles," recalled Col. Benjamin G. Humphreys, "All knew that the work of death had begun; nearer and nearer it came." McLaws' aide-de-camp, Capt. G. B. Lamar, later recalled, "When I carried [to Barksdale] the order to advance, his face was radiant with joy." He had earlier gathered his regimental commanders to give them their orders, including one that stated all field officers, excluding the general and his staff, would dismount and advance on foot. Barksdale ended by stating, "The line before you must be broken — to do so let every officer and man animate his comrades by his personal presence in the front line." As will be seen, Barksdale followed his own orders to the letter, personally leading the attack and setting the example for his officers and men to follow. Colonel Humphreys remembered, "Gen. Barksdale rode to the center of his brigade and in a firm voice gave the command: '*Attention, Mississippians!*'" One veteran later recalled this dramatic moment:



*Brig. Gen. William Barksdale. CWLM*

When the order was given...every man in the brigade knew that "our turn" had come at last.... Like an electric shock it brought every man...up standing. At the same time General Barksdale...rode...rapidly...to...the head of his old regiment, the 13<sup>th</sup>.... As this was destined to be my last sight of him, impressions of his appearance are indelible. Stamped on his face, and in his bearing, as he rode by,

was determination “to do or die.” Next came the ringing command—“Double quick, charge,” and...the brigade sped swiftly across the field....<sup>114</sup>

Captain Lamar remembered that Barksdale “was in front of his brigade with his hat off, and his long white hair reminded me of the white plume of Navarre. I saw him as far as the eye could reach, still ahead of his men, cheering them on.” Wofford’s brigade followed about 200 yards behind.<sup>115</sup>

Despite its incredibly high morale, it must be remembered that the attack of Barksdale’s and Wofford’s brigades had apparently started late, for whatever reason, and had resulted in Kershaw’s exposed left being raked by the destructive fire from the Peach Orchard batteries. This delay, while deadly to Kershaw’s men, now gave, by accident or design, both Barksdale and Wofford a great advantage. By the time their attack started, the already outnumbered Union defenders in the Peach Orchard had committed their only reserves (2<sup>nd</sup> New Hampshire, 141<sup>st</sup> Pennsylvania, and 3<sup>rd</sup> Maine) to counter Kershaw’s advance from the south. Thus Brigadier General Graham was powerless to react to this new looming Confederate danger from the west. The weak point along the Union line, which Longstreet’s en echelon attack was designed to create, was about to be exploited by these two hard-charging brigades. The spirit of their advance was vividly described by an Alabama soldier in Brig. Gen. Cadamus Wilcox’s Brigade, immediately on Barksdale’s left:

As Longstreet’s brigades came into action the roar of the cannon was accompanied by the rattle of musketry, mingled with the yells of our boys as they moved forward on the run.... As the fire and the clamor approached [us] Barksdale threw forward his Mississippians in an unbroken line in the most magnificent charge I witnessed during the war.<sup>116</sup>

The Union defenders facing this attack were also awed by its execution. A soldier in the 2<sup>nd</sup> New Hampshire remembered, “it pushed forward with magnificent determination, its gray masses rising and falling with the inequalities of the ground, now sinking into a depression, and then bursting over a swale, but always onward.”<sup>117</sup>

Despite this, the Union line immediately opened fire, Colonel Humphreys writing that, “We soon encountered in the open field a terrible musket and artillery fire, but moved forward and broke the first line....” This was undoubtedly the Union skirmish line, positioned halfway between the Peach Orchard and Warfield Ridge. Shortly after, the Mississippians broke into a charge, one recalled, “at top speed, yelling at the top of their voices, without firing a shot, the brigade sped swiftly across the field and literally rushed the goal.” Colonel Humphreys remembered that “all were determined to break the line before them or perish.”<sup>118</sup>

It is obvious from all of these accounts that the attack of Barksdale and Wofford appeared irresistible. Their target was a 430-yard section of Graham’s line holding the western face of the Peach Orchard salient. Located along the Emmitsburg road, this line extended from the southern edge of the orchard to the Sherfy farmstead. The 18<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>, and 17<sup>th</sup> Mississippi struck the Union line north of the Wheatfield Road, between the intersection and the Sherfy buildings. The 21<sup>st</sup> Mississippi hit the western face of the Peach Orchard itself.<sup>119</sup>

Holding this section of line were three of Graham’s Pennsylvania regiments (from south to north, the 68<sup>th</sup>, 114<sup>th</sup>, and 57<sup>th</sup>), and a small element of the 2<sup>nd</sup> New Hampshire (Co. B at the Wentz farm buildings). Supporting them were, at the most, ten cannon (Captain Bucklyn’s, six Napoleons, two 3-inch rifles of Captain Thompson’s battery, and two Napoleons from Captain Ames’ battery), manned by around 165 men. Thus a total of approximately 980 men (815 infantry and 165 artillery) faced the nearly 3,000 Confederates from Barksdale’s and Wofford’s brigades.<sup>120</sup>

While this three-to-one advantage, along with Southern valor, provides a possible explanation for the rapid collapse of the Union line that soon followed, there is another, more basic, reason that should be considered. At regulation spacing, for both infantry and artillery, the Union troops facing Barksdale's and Wofford's brigades should have covered a front of around 390 yards, or 40 yards short of the position they were actually defending.<sup>121</sup> Magnifying this flaw was the placement of these troops, which apparently left a weak point around the intersection of the Wheatfield road and Emmitsburg road. While no less than six cannon straddled this crossroads (at least two of Ames' Napoleons, which were south of the Wheatfield Road, were facing west and four of Bucklyn's Napoleons were stationed to the north), it appears that there was little infantry at the intersection itself (the thirty or so men of Co. B, 2<sup>nd</sup> New Hampshire, at the Wentz farmstead, being the only troops positioned there).<sup>122</sup>

Making this situation even worse was the last-minute withdrawal of Ames' New York battery shortly before Barksdale's brigade struck the Union line. The earlier advance of the 2<sup>nd</sup> New Hampshire, 141<sup>st</sup> Pennsylvania, and 3<sup>rd</sup> Maine covered Ames' battery as it fell back by sections, so that "a part of the guns could be used to cover the retreat of the others." Despite this infantry support, however, the "enemy was so close," Captain Ames remembered, "that we could distinguish their officers as they yelled hoarsely and coarsely, 'surrender you yankee \_\_\_\_\_.'" While nobody ever explained why the battery fell back, a possible reason may have been the obvious hopelessness of holding the position.<sup>123</sup>

Thus when Barksdale's brigade struck Graham's line, its weakest link was at the road intersection. Not surprisingly the Mississippians, specifically the 17<sup>th</sup> Mississippi, punched right through. While there is no hard evidence to completely verify this claim (only a few sources from the 17<sup>th</sup> Mississippi exist and they are vague), other accounts seem to indicate that the initial Confederate breakthrough occurred here. One of the most important is an account by Wyman Holden of Co. B, 2<sup>nd</sup> New Hampshire, who also attested to the fierce determination of the Confederate onslaught:

When their infantry advanced, the constant crowding toward the center kept their ranks full and well closed up, our fire making apparently little or no impression upon them. They were reinforced from right and left at every step. When they had approached within point-blank range, they were a compact mass of humanity, and, although the shooting was good, there was not enough of it. Our thin line, already fearfully decimated by the dreadful artillery, could offer no successful resistance to such overwhelming numbers, and, lacking reinforcements, were forced to retire.<sup>124</sup>

Accounts of other Union soldiers positioned on either side of the intersection, further confirm its location as the point of the initial break in Graham's line. Holding the western edge of the Peach Orchard, and just south of the intersection, were the approximately 320 men the 68<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania, commanded by Col. Andrew Tippen. Directly confronting his regiment was Col. Benjamin G. Humphrey's 21<sup>st</sup> Mississippi, around 420 strong. While outnumbered by more than 100 men, Tippen's report makes it clear that his most serious threat came not from his front but from the right:

...significant movements on the part of the enemy made it evident that we were about to be attacked. Soon he advanced. I ordered the men to reserve their fire until reaching a certain point, when a destructive fire was opened.... Receiving heavy re-enforcements, and heavy masses of his infantry *coming down on our right*, I ordered my command to fall back.... (emphasis added)<sup>125</sup>

Complicating the regiment's situation even more was the heavy artillery fire it experienced at this critical time. Colonel Bailey, of the 2<sup>nd</sup> New Hampshire, later recalled this fire, and although he confused the 68<sup>th</sup> for the 63<sup>rd</sup> Pennsylvania, his description of the artillery's impact was unmistakable:

As this advance was made the enemies batteries showered upon us a perfect hail of metal, which had [a] most fatal effect on the 63d [68<sup>th</sup>] Pa. Regt., as that was from its position more exposed there [than] was my own command.... The 63d [68<sup>th</sup>] Regt endured the fire for some minutes but was obliged to retire from its exposed position....<sup>126</sup>

The withdrawal of the 68<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania not only marked the beginning of the collapse of the Union line in the Peach Orchard, but also spelled doom for the 2<sup>nd</sup> New Hampshire, 3<sup>rd</sup> Maine, and 141<sup>st</sup> Pennsylvania. Holding the southern edge of the orchard against Kershaw's left wing, these three regiments suddenly found their right-rear completely exposed to the hard-charging 21<sup>st</sup> Mississippi. Closest to this approaching danger was the 2<sup>nd</sup> New Hampshire, whose right flank extended to and slightly beyond the Emmitsburg road. Making their situation even worse was the withdrawal of their supports from each flank. One New Englander later described the scene:

The Sixty-eighth, which had been losing heavily, withdrew up the slope before the impact came, and immediately after, the Third Maine also fell back. The charging [Confederate] column, its front now blazing with the fire of small arms, advanced across the unprotected right flank of the Second.<sup>127</sup>

Facing Confederate troops both to his front and flank, Colonel Bailey realized instantly the desperate situation he now faced and reacted immediately to counter it. In order to save itself the regiment had to both withdraw and change its facing at the same time. He later wrote, "I was forced to retire, and, in doing so, made two changes of front to rear on my left company...." In essence, the regiment executed a withdrawal, at the same time changing its facing from the south to the west, all the while under an intense cross-fire from those same directions. One New Hampshire veteran later wrote:

The subsequent evolutions of the regiment could only have been performed by troops of superlative discipline and nerve. The regiment was about-faced and retired, making a change of front to the rear while marching.<sup>128</sup>

In his report Colonel Bailey described his regiment's trying withdrawal through the Peach Orchard, writing:

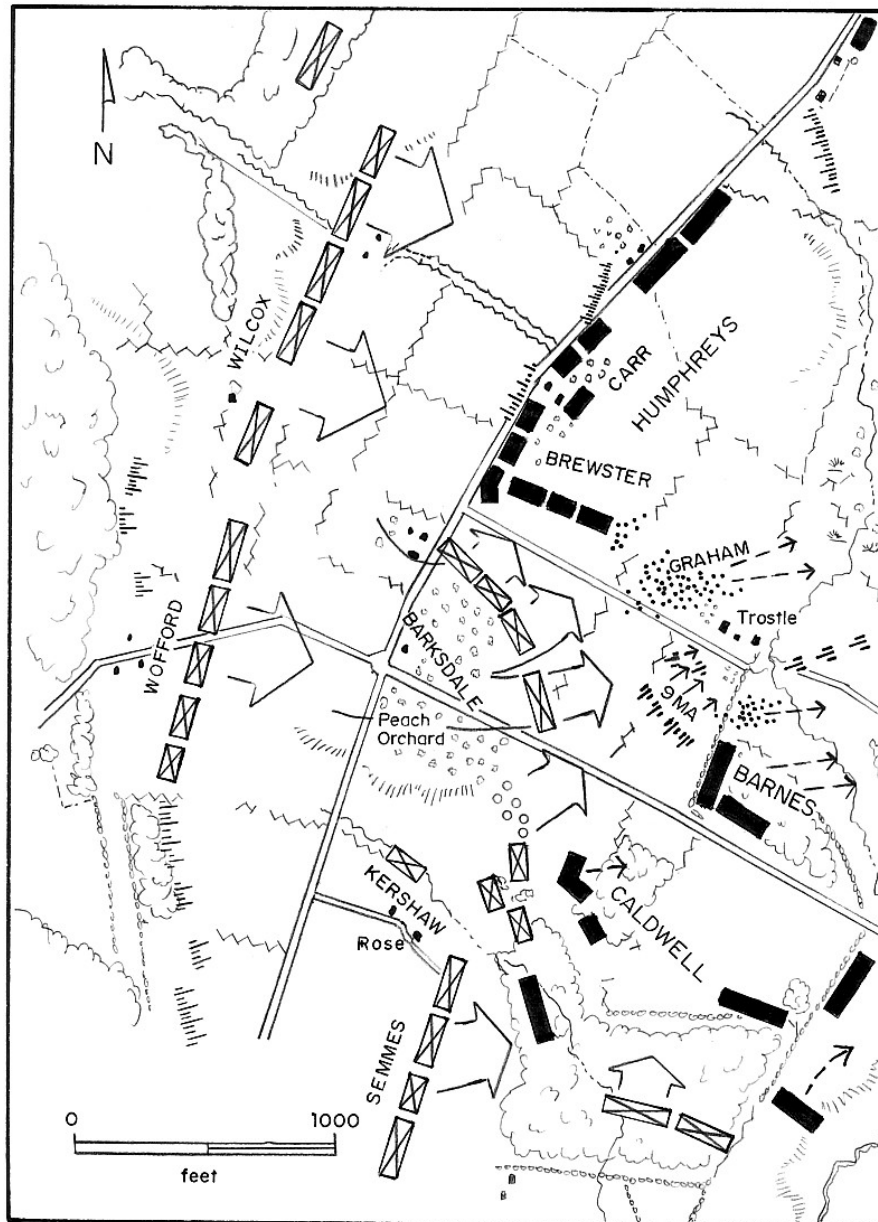
Finding myself thus unsupported, and the enemy steadily advancing, I ordered my regiment to fall back slowly, firing, which was fully executed. I moved to the rear...halting...on the brow [of the hill] to give a volley to the enemy, then but 20 yards distant.<sup>129</sup>

This first halt occurred "Half way through the peach orchard," where a slight crown exists before the ground slopes off more steeply to the east. Bailey apparently attempted to make a stand here, as the regiment "halted and maintained a sharp fire," but "finding myself still being outflanked on my right, I again changed front to rear, forming under the crest of the hill and nearly parallel to the Emmitsburg road." Here the regiment got a slight reprieve, being "under cover, somewhat, of the eastern slope of the ridge" and "the enemy not following closely...." At



this point the 2<sup>nd</sup> New Hampshire, along with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Maine and 68<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania who had reformed, created a new makeshift line. Colonel Bailey later described it:

Here, my command became the apex of the *echelon*...the 3d Maine Regt., being twenty paces or so in rear of my left flank and the [68<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania] Regt....on my right flank...twenty paces or more behind....<sup>130</sup>



*Barksdale's brigade breaks the 3<sup>rd</sup> Corps line at the Peach Orchard. 6 P.M.*

In the short instant before the 21<sup>st</sup> Mississippi appeared over the crest, Bailey “being a little dissatisfied” with his condition of his battle line “ordered, ‘On the center, dress!’” The colonel later vividly recalled what happened next:

I shall never forget that then I heard for the last time the voice of Captain Henry N. Metcalf, who, dressing his company as coolly as if upon parade, having finished said in a low tone intended for my ear alone, with a twinkle of satisfaction lighting his eye, ‘How does that line suit you, Colonel?’ eliciting the response, ‘Excellent! Excellent!’ for it was well deserved.<sup>131</sup>

Metcalf then turned to Cpl. W. H. Piper and said, “A good line, that, Henry.” These would be the captain’s last words, for at that moment the 21<sup>st</sup> Mississippi appeared over the rise and opened fire. Metcalf was killed instantly “with a bullet in his brain.” At nearly point-blank range the opposing lines exploded in smoke and flame, producing, according to one New Hampshire soldier, “a few moments of very close and very ugly work....” Being larger, and apparently delivering a more disciplined fire, the Mississippians inflicted heavier casualties upon the 2<sup>nd</sup> New Hampshire. Even worse, Bailey reported, “The enemy continued advancing...when their left swept toward the Sixty-[eighth] Pennsylvania in such overwhelming numbers as to cause it to give way....” This threat resulted not only from the final retreat of the 68<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania, but also the collapse of Graham’s line at the road intersection, as discussed earlier. Bailey was also fearful of “those regiments which had been observed marching toward my left might appear upon that flank [Kershaw’s left wing].” Outnumbered and with both flanks threatened “and knowing our efforts must prove futile against such fearful odds,” Bailey stated, “I gave the order to retire...”<sup>132</sup>

The 2<sup>nd</sup> New Hampshire had stood firm against hopeless odds. Proof of this were not only their heavy casualties (193 out of 350, more than 54 percent), but also the visual record they left on the field. Colonel Bailey described this when he returned to the scene of their final stand shortly after the battle:

...I believe I was among the first to enter the peach orchard after the battle was over...and we found the regimental line plainly marked by our dead: here, Captain Metcalf, to the left, Captain Roberts, and from right to left each company’s station, as gallant and glorious an offering of discipline and devotion as ever was laid upon the altar of our country.<sup>133</sup>

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Maine, off to the 2<sup>nd</sup> New Hampshire’s left rear, faced these same deteriorating circumstances. Its commander, Col. Moses Lakeman, reported the regiment’s final moments in the Peach Orchard:

...I engaged them [Barksdale’s brigade] and held them for some fifteen minutes, when I received a severe flank fire on my left [most likely from Kershaw’s brigade]. I then saw a large force marching round to cut me off, and ordered my regiment to retire, and while doing so we received a most distressing fire, which threw my command into much confusion, and mixing them up with a portion of the First Brigade [Graham], which was also falling back.

When Lakeman rallied his “shattered regiment” he found he had lost more than 120 of his 210 officers and men, or 58 percent. To add insult to injury he also discovered the regiment’s national flag had been captured.<sup>134</sup>



*Capt. Henry N. Metcalf, Company F, 2<sup>nd</sup> New Hampshire. Haynes, History of the 2<sup>nd</sup> New Hampshire*

The retreat of the 2<sup>nd</sup> New Hampshire, along with that of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Maine, 68<sup>th</sup> and 141<sup>st</sup> Pennsylvania, marked the end of Union resistance in the Peach Orchard itself. As this struggle played out south of the Wheatfield road, the remainder of Graham's line was engaged with Barksdale's other three regiments to the north. Here too the Union troops experienced a similar fate.

Defending the area from the road intersection to the Trostle farm lane were, from south to north, Co. B, 2<sup>nd</sup> New Hampshire (at the Wentz buildings), four guns of Bucklyn's Battery E, 1<sup>st</sup> Rhode Island with the 114<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania to the battery's right and rear, followed by two guns each from both Bucklyn's battery and Capt. James Thompson's batteries C & F, 1<sup>st</sup> Pennsylvania (both stationed at the Sherfy buildings), and the 57<sup>th</sup> and 105<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania, with a total strength of approximately 880 officers and men.<sup>135</sup>

These troops were being assaulted by nearly 1,200 men from Barksdale's three remaining Mississippi regiments (the 17<sup>th</sup> at the road intersection, the 13<sup>th</sup> from north of the intersection to the Sherfy buildings, and the 18<sup>th</sup> at the farmstead itself). Half of Wofford's brigade, or around 740 officers and men (Phillip's Legion, Cobb's Legion, and the 16<sup>th</sup> Georgia, from left to right) advanced just behind Barksdale's line. This brought the total Confederate strength at and north of the Wheatfield road to more than 1,900, giving them just less than a 2-to-1 advantage.<sup>136</sup>

Other than Company B, 2<sup>nd</sup> New Hampshire at the Wentz farmstead, the principal Union defenders immediately north of the Wheatfield road were Bucklyn's four guns, positioned approximately 150 yards north of the intersection, and the infantry support to his rear, all of whom faced the 13<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Mississippi. Bucklyn's and Thompson's other guns around the Sherfy buildings confronted the 18<sup>th</sup> Mississippi. Again, as with the Union line in the Peach Orchard, accounts from the Union defenders north of the intersection pinpoint the beginning of the collapse of Graham's line at the road junction. George Lewis, a member of the battery, described this, writing:

Many of our men and horses had already been wounded, but the worse had not come. It was not until the troops at our *left centre had been driven back* that we saw any serious danger menacing our position, but when the battle began to rage almost in our rear, with our front threatened by the advancing of Barksdale's brigade, we began to fear that the Army of the Potomac would have to resume its habit of retreating.... Barksdale evidently intended to capture our battery, and, as he...approached, [Confederate] artillery seemed to redouble its fury upon us. ...it was found impossible to continue the struggle much longer. Our rear being threatened, and our front about to be attacked by infantry...it was considered best to withdraw the artillery and leave the field to our infantry. (emphasis added)<sup>137</sup>

These hard-pressed artillerymen quickly discovered that withdrawing their guns would be extremely difficult. Lewis continued:

...the Fifty-seventh, One Hundred and Fifth, and One Hundred and Fourteenth Pennsylvania regiments were ordered to advance to the front of our position, and the latter...passing through our battery.... The line of battle formed by these commands advanced as far as Sherfy's barn, where they promptly engaged Barksdale's advancing brigade.... During this movement Battery E was being severely shelled by the enemy's enfilading batteries on the left. From the front Barksdale's troops were advancing, their fire rapidly reducing us both in men and horses.... Already nearly one-half of our horses and one-third of our men were either killed or wounded. The left section, and probably the centre, also...retired to the crest of the hill by the use of the prolonge.<sup>138</sup>

The battery's closest support was the 114<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania, located to its right rear. As the Mississippians' steady advance neared the battery it was obvious that the guns were in danger. In his report, Capt. Edward Bowen recalled these critical moments, writing, "Captain Randolph, chief of artillery of the corps, at this moment rode up to the regiment, and ordered us to advance, saying, "If you want to save my battery, move forward. I cannot find the general. I give the order on my own responsibility." Bowen's description not only captured the chaos that quickly followed, but also confirmed the first break in the Peach Orchard line was at the road intersection to the regiment's left:

The regiment sprang forward with alacrity and passed through and to the front of the battery, which hastily limbered up and got to the rear. The impetus of our advance carried us to the Emmitsburg road, in the face of the murderous musketry fire of the advancing enemy. Reaching the road we clambered over the fence and crossed it. Sherfy's house and outbuildings intervening between us and the approaching enemy, the right of the regiment was advanced to the rear of the house. While advancing in this way our men were loading and firing as rapidly as possible, and several times pauses were made, notably as we stood on the Emmitsburg road, and corrected the alignment, which was broken by clambering over the fence. During all this time we were receiving a terrible musketry fire from the rapidly approaching enemy, and men were falling by scores.... Soon it became apparent that it was impossible that we should be able to hold our ground against such overwhelming numbers. Already *they were on our left and in our rear, the regiments on our left having been swept away.* (emphasis added)<sup>139</sup>

As soon as Barksdale's advance began Graham sensed the precarious situation his brigade faced and made an urgent request for reinforcements. This message went to Sickles, who turned to his only remaining resource: Maj. Gen. Andrew Humphrey's division. Despite having already received reinforcements from elements of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Corps, along with detaching one of Humphrey's three brigades (Burling) to support the left, Sickles' line was on the verge of collapse. In desperation he ordered Humphrey's to further weaken his division by sending another regiment to Graham's support. For Humphreys, this command could not have come at a worse time, for he reported:

...at that moment [I received]...word that the enemy was driving in my pickets, and was about advancing in two lines to the attack. The demand for aid was so urgent, however, that I sent Major [Michael] Burns'...[73<sup>rd</sup> New York] to General Graham's brigade....<sup>140</sup>

The 73<sup>rd</sup> New York, known as the 2<sup>nd</sup> Fire Zouaves as many of its members had been New York City firemen before their enlistment, numbered about 350 officers and men and belonged to Col. William Brewster's Excelsior brigade. The regiment lay in reserve, just behind the left end of Humphrey's line, with its left flank nearly touching the Trostle farm lane. Delivering the order to the regiment was Maj. Henry Tremain, who had earlier served with the regiment and knew it and its officers well. The most vivid and detailed account of the regiment's role in the Peach Orchard struggle was written by Lt. Francis Moran, commanding Company H. He recalled the men's movement to the left into Sherfy's young peach orchard, and their arrival just before the 114<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania was forced to withdraw:

Maj. [Henry] Tremain...of Sickles's staff, came toward us from the left at a gallop. We knew his message well before he reached us, and the men sprang into line, and facing left we moved toward the orchard at double-quick through a shower of bullets and bursting shells. The 114<sup>th</sup> Pa, stretched along the Emmitsburg road from the gate of the Sherfy house and past the barn, were hotly at work and sorely pressed, but facing their foes gallantly...disputing the ground with the Mississippians, who, lead by Barksdale, came swarming up...yelling like demons.... Our regiment, out of breath from its rapid approach, came quickly into line, and the "click," "click" of cocking muskets showed that the men were ready for battle. We were, for a few minutes (the One Hundred and Fourteenth being still in our front...) unable to fire a shot at the advancing enemy without shooting our friends in the back, although exposed to a murderous fire of musketry from front and a shower of bursting shells from Longstreet's batteries on our left, which killed men and horses on every side. At last the One Hundred and Fourteenth, with a parting volley in the very faces of the Mississippians, made room for us, and our regiment poured a quick and well-directed volley at the enemy, who fell in scores.... They staggered, but closed up, and with the familiar "Hi-yi!" returned our fire and pressed forward with the savage courage of baited bulls.... Our men kept at work with perfect steadiness. The smoke grew thicker each minute and the sound of exploding shells was deafening. Officers and men were falling every minute and on every side.... The whole Third Corps was now in, and its angled front could be traced by a line of fire and waving flags from where Humphreys' right brigade aligned itself along the road leading to the town from the right of Sherfy's to where the lane intersects it in the Peach Orchard, and where later bending there led by the Wheatfield and the "Den" to the base of Little Round Top. The batteries of [Bucklyn]...[and] McGilvery...were belching shot, shell and grape into the faces of Longstreet's charging columns; showers of branches fell from the peach trees in the orchard in the leaden hurricane that swept it from two sides. Every door, window and sash of the Sherfy house was shivered to atoms. The barn close by was riddled like a sieve from base to roof, and cannon shot at every instant split its boards and timbers into showers of kindling-wood. A shell burst under a load of rails beside it, and whipped them through the air like straws in a whirlwind. Couriers and Aids dashed right and left with orders; officers brandished swords and pistols, and shouted commands which could not be heard 20 feet away. Shells burst over the heads of the firing infantry, and sent up volcanoes of sand in the front and rear of the fighting line. Innumerable balloons of smoke floated over the field and marked where shells had burst and sent their deadly messengers for victims below. Torn flags and guidons along the line fell and rose again through the thickening powder fog. Soldiers...with...ghastly...wounds, streamed...from the orchard...towards the low swale in rear.... Round Top was now crowned with artillery...and [Union] flags...rose out of the smoke of battle like a burning colosseum.... In the confusion of voices the word came along the line that we were about to charge and the men broke forth into a cheer.<sup>141</sup>

The "charge" Moran described never occurred, for immediately afterward the Union line to their left (at the road intersection and in the Peach Orchard itself) gave way. Longstreet's en echelon attack had worked to perfection. By the time Barksdale and Wofford stepped off Warfield Ridge nearly all of the Union reserves sent to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Corps' support had been committed into battle along its left wing (at Little Round Top, Devil's Den, and the Wheatfield). As seen above, Sickles could do very little to counter the Confederate assault on the Peach Orchard Knoll

itself. The detachment of the 73<sup>rd</sup> New York was a matter of too little, too late. Although reinforced by four regiments (the 2<sup>nd</sup> New Hampshire, 3<sup>rd</sup> Maine, 3<sup>rd</sup> Michigan, and 73<sup>rd</sup> New York) and two batteries of artillery (Ames and Thompson), Graham's line crumbled rapidly under the heavy blows of Barksdale, Wofford, and Kershaw.<sup>142</sup>

This resulted not only from Longstreet's en echelon attack plan, but also the inherent flaws of the Peach Orchard as a defensive position. The "key" to Sickles' forward line was also its weakest point. This Confederate breakthrough, at the salient angle of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Corps' position, signaled its doom, for the loss of the Peach Orchard made it impossible for the corps to maintain its forward line. The breakthrough not only left a gaping hole in Sickles' front, but more importantly each of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Corps' wings could be easily flanked and routed. Not surprisingly, the Confederates lost no time in taking advantage of the situation.

*"The enemy now had possession of the Emmitsburg road as far as Sherfy's, and beyond. There... Union troops... were forced back and northward from it. The angle was smashed, and everything going to the rear."*<sup>143</sup>

Martin Haynes, 2<sup>nd</sup> New Hampshire

*"The Peach Orchard angle... acted as a wedge and divided Longstreet's line between Kershaw's and Barksdale's Brigades, which had attacked and broken it. Kershaw... moved over and expended their force in the [Wheatfield] ... and around the Round Tops; while Barksdale... was drawn... to his left... [and] became heavily engaged with the flank of [Maj. Gen. A. A.] Humphreys Division...."*<sup>144</sup>

Capt. John Bigelow, 9<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Battery

Barksdale's victorious regiments, after breaking Graham's line in the Peach Orchard and at the road intersection, followed their pre-assault orders to change the



Col. Benjamin Humphreys,  
21<sup>st</sup> Mississippi. LC.

direction of their attack. On the brigade's right was Colonel Humphreys of the 21<sup>st</sup> Mississippi, who remembered, "In conformity with orders, Gen. Barksdale at this point gives the command to wheel to the left, which is... done...." The timing and execution of this movement was done with perfection and put the Mississippians directly on the left flank and rear of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Corps regiments along the Emmitsburg road. Directly in the path of this new attack was the 73<sup>rd</sup> New York. Hard pressed by the 13<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Mississippi to its front, the regiment suddenly came under attack from its left. Lieutenant Moran later described what happened next:

At this time... our thin line... was pressed back... and our left being thus imperiled, an aid galloped towards us and directed our immediate withdrawal towards the Emmetsburg road.... Our little regiment was melting away fast in the deadly cross-fire, but stood to its work unflinchingly, and closed at last in semi-circle around its riddled flag. Our color-bearer was struck dead. A brave

man instantly caught up the flag and waved it defiantly. A bullet shattered his arm in a few minutes, and a third man held it up.... But the fast melting line to our left grew perilously thin, and at last began to retire.... The rebel infantry entered the orchard and we received their fire almost in our very backs. At last

an officer of [Maj. Gen. Andrew] Humphreys's staff gave [Maj. Michael] Burns the order to retire...and the little remnant of the regiment, leaving their, dead and dying under their feet, slowly retreated....<sup>145</sup>

One of the regiments delivering this devastating fire was the 21<sup>st</sup> Mississippi, whose actions this day more than earned its share of laurels. In executing its left wheel, the regiment swept through the Peach Orchard, drove out its Union defenders and overran a gun of Thompson's battery. Captain Thompson reported the gun's loss, writing, "having the horses in one of the gun's limbers killed...I had the gun horses disengaged, and the piece moved off some distance by hand...[but] with the enemy...gaining ground rapidly on us, the infantry that were assisting us left, and we were compelled to leave" the gun and limber. Making this capture even more impressive was that it was accomplished despite the presence of supporting Union infantry.<sup>146</sup>

The 21<sup>st</sup> Mississippi was far from done, as it (along with the rest of Barksdale's brigade) captured more than 200 prisoners. Included in this number was Brig. Gen. Charles Graham, who recalled the chaotic moments leading up to his demise:

...I had been twice wounded, had a horse shot under me, and my sword shot out of my hand. Finally the Brigade broke beyond recovery as did the troops on its right and left. Although exhausted by the loss of blood and walking, when another horse was brought to me I was lifted upon it and made an endeavor to collect the remnant of my troops. Whilst thus engaged, I saw a regiment approaching me, which I took at first for one of my own but which on approaching within 150 yards of me I discovered to belong to the enemy. As soon as the discovery was made I turned my horse, drove my spurs into his flanks at the same time throwing myself forward on his neck to present as little surface as possible. The battalion saw me fired[,] my horse fell pierced by five bullets. Unable to rise I remained on the ground until the regiment (the 21<sup>st</sup> Mississippi) came up when I surrendered to one of its captains.<sup>147</sup>

At this same time the rest of Barksdale's brigade also executed its left wheel in order to drive north, or up the Emmitsburg road. The 17<sup>th</sup> Mississippi completed this maneuver first, after easily punching through the thin Union line at the road intersection, and thus was squarely on the left flank of the 114<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania and 73<sup>rd</sup> New York, as Lieutenant Moran described earlier. As this struggle raged through Sherfy's young peach orchard, the 13<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Mississippi engaged the center and right of the 114<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania, along with the 57<sup>th</sup> and 105<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania, the latter two regiments being positioned in and around the Sherfy buildings. One Pennsylvania soldier recalled:

The 57<sup>th</sup> and 114<sup>th</sup> were ordered across the road where we beheld the enemy, which proved to be Barksdale's Mississippi brigade, advancing through the fields towards us. Our regiment at once took advantage of the cover that the house, outbuildings and trees afforded and opened fire...for a while we had the best of the fight owing to our sheltered position. The men of the 57<sup>th</sup> who were in the house kept up a steady fire from the west windows....<sup>148</sup>

A fierce fight for the large barn also ensued, which was described by one Mississippi officer who later wrote:

I called to the men that the barn must be captured and to follow me.... They followed me with a rush and I forced the door open, and within less than two minutes we had killed, wounded or captured every man in the barn. The barn

was filled with smoke so dense that it was very nearly impossible to distinguish a man's body in it, such a continuous fire had the enemy within kept up.<sup>149</sup>

Facing tremendous pressure on both their left and front, to the men of the 114<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania it "seemed as though we were surrounded and could not escape capture." It quickly became obvious that only "one avenue of escape was open to us, and that was up the Emmitsburg road." The regiment used its colors as a rallying point as it conducted a fighting withdrawal to the north. Capt. Edward Bowen remembered, "we made a stand, pouring a volley into the enemy, who was almost upon us, and then retreated up the road, many falling by the way...."<sup>150</sup>

A Mississippi veteran also recalled this moving battle as it shifted north to the Sherfy farmstead:

Our left regiment, the 18<sup>th</sup> [Mississippi], breasted a hot fire from a large brick barn-converted into a fortress by a Zouave regiment of Graham's brigade [114<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania] — which they captured.... The 13<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> [Mississippi] swept the line [to the south]. ...when the blue coats saw us swarming over the fences and across the Emmetsburg road, without pausing, they began to "back out." ...they fought bravely, retiring slowly until the firing was at close quarters, when...our men took heavy toll for the losses inflicted upon them.<sup>151</sup>

The next regiment in line was the 57<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania, positioned in and around the Sherfy house, and who suffered the same fate as the Zouaves. One member of the 57<sup>th</sup> stated that with their left flank turned, "the regiments along the Emmitsburg road were enfiladed and obliged to fall back also." "It was evident," remembered 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt. E. C. Strauss, "that if we remained at the house, we would all be captured...." Another later wrote:

When we found the enemy coming up the road in our rear, Captain [Alanson] Nelson...tried to notify those in the house, and order them to fall back, but amid the noise and confusion it was impossible to make them understand the situation, and they kept on firing...after the rest of the men fell back, and were summoned to surrender by the rebels....<sup>152</sup>

As Graham's regiments conducted their slow retreat up the road the 105<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania faced this same pressure. According to the regiment's historian:

The fighting was desperate, the rebels advancing all the while; but the brigade held its ground, until the line on its left giving way, the enemy poured into its flank and rear a most murderous fire, felling men like grass before the scythe and forcing them back; but they rallied again and again, drove the enemy back to Sherfy's house; but the force opposed to them was too heavy, and they gradually retired, firing deliberately at the enemy as they withdrew.<sup>153</sup>

Although ultimately forced to retreat, the regiment's commander, Col. Calvin Craig, was proud of his men, writing later that month, "The One Hundred and Fifth never fought better than at Gettysburg.... We rallied some eight or ten times...and the boys fought like demons. Their battle-cry was 'Pennsylvania.'" Their bravery on this day, however, was not enough and the withdrawal continued.<sup>154</sup>

As the attack cleared both of Sherfy's orchards and reached the eastern slope of the knoll, Barksdale's men must have felt that total victory was at hand. One remembered the fury of their assault, writing, "we [were]...in among the enemy, literally running them over." Colonel



Humphreys recalled that as his regiment “pushed on...the Federals [were] fleeing to the right and left...” In another account Humphreys described the situation in more detail:

When we emerged from the Peach Orchard, I could see to our left some Federal lines moving to the rear hurriedly...a movement necessitated by the break in Sickles Corps at the Peach Orchard...Barksdale moved forward, but where we advanced, one or two hundred yards beyond [the] Peach Orchard I discovered some guns at the front of the slope, to my right firing rapidly on Kershaw’s line.<sup>155</sup>

He was describing the batteries of Clark, Phillips, and Bigelow along the Wheatfield road. While some of these guns were still firing, most were in early stages of pulling back. This retreat was also witnessed by Lieutenant Moran of the 73<sup>rd</sup> New York, which was still in Sherfy’s young orchard. Moran provided a vivid account of the batteries’ desperate efforts to escape:

A glance to the left at moment revealed a thrilling battle picture. The shattered line was retreating in separated streams, artillerists heroically clinging to their still smoking guns, and brave little infantry squads assisting them with their endangered cannon over the soft ground. The position of these batteries showed broken gun carriages, caissons and wheels, while scores of slain horses and men lay across each other in mangled and ghastly heaps.<sup>156</sup>

If the Union batteries in Peach Orchard, who had supporting infantry nearby, were hard-pressed during their withdrawal, it is not surprising that the circumstances faced by the unsupported batteries on the Wheatfield road were even worse. Capt. Clark’s New Jersey battery, being the closest to the advancing Confederates, experienced tremendous pressure during its withdrawal. One of its cannoners later wrote:

The Captain gave the orders to limber up and go to the rear.... The [Union] infantry on our flanks had fallen back. The enemy (Barksdale’s Brigade) were half way through the Peach Orchard on our right flank, as...the lead team was hit. Higgins jumped out of the saddle and cut the traces, and the gun drove off with four horses. A Rebel yelled, “Halt, you Yankee sons of \_\_\_\_\_; we want those guns!” Ennis yelled back, “Go to h\_\_ll! We want to use them yet awhile.” ...Two cannoniers rode out on axle, holding on as best they could.<sup>157</sup>

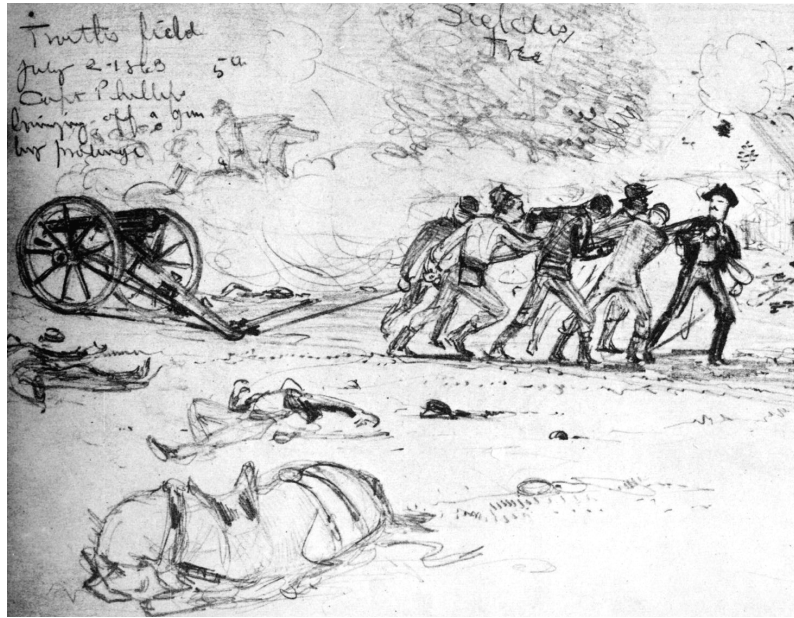
Keeping a close watch of this deteriorating situation was Lt. Col. Freeman McGilvery, who reported, “The enemy’s infantry gained possession of the woods immediately on the left of my line of batteries, and our infantry fell back both on our right and left, when great disorder ensued on both flanks...” Down to just two batteries (Phillips and Bigelow), McGilvery not only faced pressure on his left and front (Kershaw’s left wing) but also on his right (Barksdale). Sensing the hopelessness of holding this line, McGilvery ordered the batteries to fall back.<sup>158</sup>

Despite the chaos swirling around them the men of these two batteries continued to concentrate on the most immediate threat: Kershaw’s steadily advancing line to their front and left. Proof of this incredible discipline was described by Bugler Charles Reed, of the 9<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Battery, who wrote, “We were so intent upon our work that we noticed not when the other batteries left...” Bigelow and Phillips, however, were well aware of their worsening situation. Bigelow recalled:

Glancing towards the Peach Orchard on my right, I saw that the Confederates had come through and were forming a line 200 yards distant, extending back, parallel with the Emmitsburg Road as far as I could see....<sup>159</sup>

The closest of these approaching Confederates was Colonel Humphreys' 21<sup>st</sup> Mississippi. Humphreys later stated that it would have been "hazardous" to leave these two batteries "on my right [in order] to rejoin Barksdale." While true, he was also probably tempted by the possibility of easily capturing several cannon from these unsupported batteries. Thus, without hesitation, Colonel Humphreys "immediately wheeled the 21<sup>st</sup> Regt. away from the Brigade and to the right."<sup>160</sup>

Although Capt. Charles Phillips' 5<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Battery was the closest target to this new threat, his withdrawal was well underway by this time. His center and right sections had gotten started without difficulty, but his left section, commanded by Lt. Henry Scott, ran into serious problems. Phillips had ordered Scott to have the section "fix prolonge and fire retiring." This maneuver involved attaching one end of a prolonge (a 14-foot rope) to the limber and the other end to the gun trail. In this way the gun and limber can be pulled by its horses, but "firing can be continued, although the gun is moving." The captain felt this would keep the 21<sup>st</sup> Mississippi at bay and at the same time cover Captain Bigelow's guns to the left. It did not work.<sup>161</sup>



*Bugler Charles Reed of the 9<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Battery sketched this drawing of Captain Phillips dragging one of his guns off by the prolonge rope. Phillips is on the far right. LC.*

By the time the men began to attach the prolonge, Lieutenant Scott recalled, "the enemy were almost upon us." Captain Phillips described what happened next:

The horses on my left piece were knocked over, and we started the piece off by hand. Lieut. Scott was pushing the piece off when a bullet struck him in the face passing through both cheeks, and breaking the roof of his mouth.<sup>162</sup>

At one point it became so desperate that Phillips "dismounted and seized the end of the prolonge, throwing it over my shoulder." Thus the battery commander and four of his men dragged the cannon off by hand to safety. McGilvery was amazed by this episode, reporting:

Captain Phillips, Lieutenant Scott, and 4 men hauled one of his pieces off by hand, every horse in the limbers having been shot down, at which work Lieutenant Scott received a serious wound in the face, and it is mystery to me

that they were not all hit by the enemy's fire, as they were surrounded and fired upon from almost every direction.<sup>163</sup>

Bigelow had watched the beginning of Phillips' retreat when suddenly "Colonel McGilvery rode up...and told me 'all of Sickles' men had withdrawn and I was alone on the field, without support of any kind; limber up and get out.'" Bigelow realized the order could not be carried out, for without support and with Confederates skirmishers so close, "every saddle would have been emptied in trying to limber up." Making a swift decision, the captain told McGilvery "I must 'retire by prolonge and firing,' in order to 'keep them off.'" Bigelow was essentially asking permission to execute the same difficult maneuver that had just failed so miserably in the 5<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Battery. Making it even riskier for the men in the 9<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts was the fact that they were untried troops, experiencing their "baptism of fire" at Gettysburg. Bigelow was well aware of the many obstacles and problems that could result in disaster for the battery. If nothing else, Bigelow's bold decision revealed the confidence he had in his men. McGilvery also must have realized the risk, but quickly "assented and rode away." Either the lieutenant colonel trusted Bigelow or simply agreed the captain had no other choice.<sup>164</sup>

Whatever the reason, orders were quickly given, the prolonges were fixed and the battery began to withdraw. It was a movement beset by obstacles. They had more than 400 yards to traverse, without support and under fire from both Confederate infantry and artillery. Bugler Reed recalled that "the Rebs as soon as they saw us limber up threw up a number of sharpshooters who fired on with...deadly effect[.] we fired retiring slowly...." Their only escape route was a single gateway through a stone wall near the Abraham Trostle buildings. Furthermore, the battery was under tremendous pressure from both left and front (many of Kershaw's skirmishers followed the guns) and the right (21<sup>st</sup> Mississippi).<sup>165</sup>

Despite all of these obstacles, however, the "Battery kept well aligned in retiring," and moved steadily back "with a slow, sullen fire." Captain Bigelow later described the retreat:

...we withdrew — the left section keeping Kershaw's skirmishers back with canister, and the other two sections bowling solid shot towards Barksdale's men. We moved slowly, the recoil of the guns retiring them, while the prolonges enabled us to keep the alignment; but the loss in men and horses was severe.<sup>166</sup>

The 21<sup>st</sup> Mississippi's pursuit of Bigelow's battery led the regiment in a northeast direction. At the same time the remainder of Barksdale's brigade continued its advance north, or up the Emmitsburg road. These movements created an ever-widening gap in the Union line, from the left of Maj. Gen. Andrew Humphreys' division and the right flank of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Corps troops fighting in Rose Woods at the Stony Hill. Into this gap marched Brig. Gen. W. T. Wofford's Georgia brigade.

While sources detailing this brigade's role in the Confederate attack are few and vague, it seems obvious they were originally to provide some type of support for the leading brigades (Barksdale and Kershaw). One of Wofford's men actually described this in a letter written shortly after the battle, writing, "When the command 'forward' was given, Wofford's brigade was formed immediately in rear of Barksdale's Mississippi brigade, to support it, and in this order the two columns advanced until the enemy was driven from the orchard."<sup>167</sup>

Wofford's regiments straddled the Wheatfield road and, after clearing Sherfy's orchards, the brigade used the road as a guide to continue its advance eastward. Questions about this movement remain unanswered today. Why did the brigade not follow Barksdale's advance? Did this movement result from pre-assault orders or from a battlefield decision? More than likely it was a decision made during the attack and in reaction to swiftly changing events. A member of the brigade seemed to confirm this, writing three weeks later, "Here [at Peach Orchard] it became

necessary to change direction...Barksdale obliqueing to the left...leaving the field [to the east] unobstructed....”<sup>168</sup>

Advancing straight, or to the east, had several advantages, including filling the gap between Kershaw’s left and Barksdale’s right. It would also put Wofford squarely onto the right flank of the Union troops on the Stony Hill and Wheatfield. Whatever the reason, this decision had serious consequences as the battle continued to unfold, both for Union defenders in the Wheatfield and for Barksdale’s advancing regiments.<sup>169</sup>

For the Union troops on the Stony Hill, the impact of Wofford’s advance toward the Wheatfield became immediately obvious. One Georgia soldier described this, writing, “In the...piece of woods [Rose Wood’s at Stony Hill]...a Yankee column formed perpendicularly to Wofford’s line...when a volley from the line broke and drove the enemy’s column, in utter rout and confusion, from the woods.” Eventually, Wofford’s brigade helped to shatter much of Sickles’ left wing, as it cleared the Wheatfield, passed through the Valley of Death and proceeded to the foot of Little Round Top before its advance ran out of momentum.<sup>170</sup>

At this same time Sickles’ right wing, which consisted mostly of Maj. Gen. A. A. Humphreys’ division, was being severely punished by Barksdale’s continued attack (which will be discussed in more detail below). These successful advances of Wofford and Barksdale had completely overrun the Peach Orchard Knoll, thus placing this vital terrain under Confederate control. Even though the Peach Orchard had been captured, its influence would still be felt in the fighting that followed, for the collapse of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Corps line set up a crisis along the Union center.

*“When I saw their line broken & in retreat, I thought the battle was ours.... I rode along my guns, urging the men to limber to the front as fast as possible, telling them we would ‘finish the whole war this afternoon.’ ”*<sup>171</sup>

Col. E. P. Alexander, 1<sup>st</sup> Corps Artillery

*“It was evidently their intention...to have charged right through our lines to the Taneytown road, isolating our left wing and dividing our army.... ”*<sup>172</sup>

Lt. Edwin Dow, 6<sup>th</sup> Maine Battery

*“No other guns, or a solitary soldier could be seen before us...the Federal Army was cut in twain, and hoping for reinforcements to hold what we had gained, and thus secure a triumph over the separate wings I felt the jubilation of the victor.... ”*<sup>173</sup>

Col. Benjamin Grubb Humphreys, 21<sup>st</sup> Mississippi

Sickles’ advance of his 3<sup>rd</sup> Corps earlier that afternoon had essentially left the southern end of Cemetery Ridge undefended. As discussed earlier, nearly all of the reinforcements sent to the Union left that afternoon went to shore up Sickles’ overextended line. This included a 2<sup>nd</sup> Corps division on Cemetery Ridge, which widened the breach even more. Thus by the time the Peach Orchard was overrun, the entire left-center of the Union line along Cemetery Ridge was extremely vulnerable. This area, held only by a smattering of detached regiments and batteries, extended from the foot of Little Round Top to just south of the Copse of Trees, near the Union center. As many of the regiments and batteries, both Confederate and Union, which had been involved in the earlier struggle for the Peach Orchard also played important roles in this crisis along the Union center, its influence continued during the fighting that followed.<sup>174</sup>

The Peach Orchard Knoll itself also influenced the subsequent struggle, for following on the heels of the Confederate infantry assault came Southern artillery batteries. After a much “longer and hotter” fight than he had expected, Col. E. P. Alexander now felt “that Providence was indeed ‘taking the proper view,’ and that the war was very nearly over.” He then described one of the rare artillery charges to occur during the war:

Each battery was limbered to the front, and...all six charged in line across the plain and went into action again at the position the enemy had deserted. I can recall no more splendid sight...and certainly no more inspiring moment during the war,-than of that charge of these six batteries. An artillerist's heaven is to follow the routed enemy, after a tough resistance, and throw shells and canister into his disorganized and fleeing masses. Then the explosions of the guns sound louder and more powerful, and the very shouts of the gunners, shouting "Fire!" in rapid succession, thrill one's very soul. There is no excitement on earth like it.... Now we saw our heaven just in front, and were already breathing the very air of victory. Now we would have our revenge, and make them sorry they had stayed so long. Everything was in a rush...pieces and caissons went at a gallop, some cannoneers mounted, and some running by the sides—not in a regular line, but a general race and scramble to get there first.<sup>175</sup>

Alexander's charge consisted of six batteries, totaling 24 guns, which "spread out all through & about it [Peach Orchard and] ...were soon in action again." This, of course, had been Lee's original plan all along: to use the Peach Orchard Knoll as "a position from which...our artillery could be used to advantage in assailing the more elevated ground beyond...."<sup>176</sup>

Despite the men's extremely high élan, and Alexander's exhortations that they would "finish the whole war this afternoon," their attitude quickly changed as they redeployed their guns. Alexander later explained, writing:

...when I got to take in all the topography I was very much disappointed. It was not the enemy's main line we had broken. That loomed up near 1,000 yards beyond us, a ridge giving good cover behind it & endless fine positions for batteries.<sup>177</sup>

Far from providing the critical terrain Lee envisioned for his artillery to assail Cemetery Hill, the Peach Orchard Knoll and Emmitsburg Road Ridge proved to be unsatisfactory to Alexander and his gunners. The artillery colonel would be frustrated by this same ground the next day during the great cannonade preceding Pickett's Charge. Even still, the Confederate gun crews continued "firing at everything in sight" in an effort to assist their infantry as it advanced toward the dangerous gap in the Union line on Cemetery Ridge.<sup>178</sup>

Leading this attack was Barksdale's brigade, at that moment pushing northward up the Emmitsburg road. Having swept Brig. Gen. Charles Graham's brigade from the Peach Orchard and Sherfy farmstead, three of Barksdale's regiments (18<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>, and 17<sup>th</sup>) then collided with the left flank of Maj. Gen. Andrew Humphreys' division. Not surprisingly, Barksdale was in front, leading his men forward. Maj. G. B. Gerald, of the 18<sup>th</sup> Mississippi, recalled:

...the brigade moved through the orchard...still driving the enemy before them. General Barksdale encouraged the men by shouting, "Forward men, forward," which was the only command that I ever heard him give after the battle commenced.<sup>179</sup>

Andrew Humphreys faced a nearly impossible situation that afternoon. Not only was he outnumbered, but "I...was attacked on my flanks as well as on my front." As Barksdale's brigade struck Humphreys' left, Brig. Gen. Cadmus Wilcox's Alabama brigade attacked from the front. Wilcox belonged to Maj. Gen. Richard Anderson's division, which was to advance, en echelon, once all of Longstreet's troops were in action. Wilcox started shortly after Barksdale and Wofford made their attack.<sup>180</sup>

Holding the left of Maj. Gen. Andrew Humphreys' line was Brig. Gen. Joseph Carr who, to check Barksdale, ordered the 11<sup>th</sup> New Jersey, positioned in the Klinge orchard, to change its front to face south. This new line was formed perpendicular to the Emmitsburg road and eventually included, from right to left, the 11<sup>th</sup> New Jersey, 120<sup>th</sup> New York, and other elements of the Excelsior Brigade.<sup>181</sup>

A member of the 120<sup>th</sup> New York, in a letter written shortly after the battle, described the tense moments just before they engaged Barksdale's line:

...the thunder of the Artillery and the peals of musketry fairly made you deaf[.] our Brigade...lay down behind our stacks waiting for our time to Come when we must take our turn[.] we watched the moves of the battle with anxious hearts....<sup>182</sup>

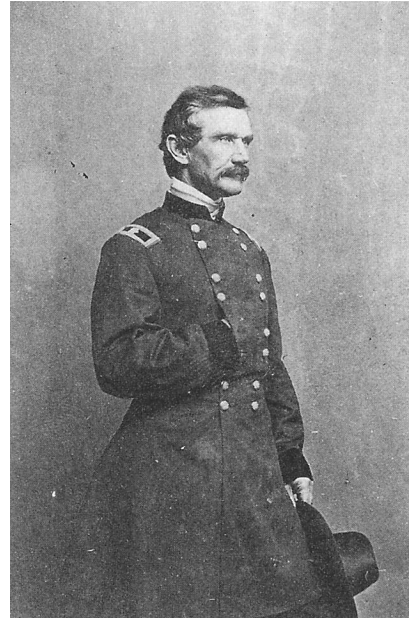
Some stragglers and elements of Graham's brigade fell back through the regiment's line. While some rallied, others did not. Following closely on their heels were the hard-charging Mississippians under Barksdale. Taking the brunt of this attack was the 11<sup>th</sup> New Jersey and 120<sup>th</sup> New York. In his report Col. Robert McAllister, 11<sup>th</sup> New Jersey, described this clash:

...we lay down awaiting the enemy. I ordered that when the enemy advanced on us we fire by rank, rear rank first, so as to be enabled to hold in check the enemy after the first fire.... It was but a few minutes until our pickets came rushing in, closely followed by the rebels... I ordered "Fire!" at which time I fell, severely wounded....<sup>183</sup>

"The fire of the enemy was at this time perfectly terrific," wrote Lt. John Schoonover of the regiment, "men were falling on every side...yet the galling fire was returned with equal vigor." The 120<sup>th</sup> New York faced a similar struggle, as one soldier described:

...the men were lying down with orders not to rise till they received the word of command. The enemy...moving forward rapidly, the order came and the whole line rose as a man and poured into their ranks such a terrible fire of musketry, as to bring them to a standstill when within a few rods of us. ...the dreadful crash of battle resounded; the rattle of musketry, the bursting of shells, the roar of cannons, mingled with the cries of the wounded, and with the cheers and yells of the determined foemen.<sup>184</sup>

Recognizing the importance of this line, Major General Humphreys attempted to steady the men by "walking his horse up and down our line," along with Col. William Brewster who "dismounted...and acted as a file closer with our own line officers." Despite these brave measures, along with the courage of the rank and file, it was only a matter of time before these few regiments were overwhelmed by Barksdale's attack. Both the 120<sup>th</sup> New York and 11<sup>th</sup> New Jersey sacrificed themselves in order to slow the Confederate onslaught, losing 53 percent and 56 percent of their men, respectively, before finally being forced to retreat.<sup>185</sup>



*Brig. Gen. Andrew A. Humphreys.*  
CWLM

In the midst of this vortex was Andrew Humphreys himself, who later stated, "I have never been under a hotter artillery and musketry fire combined...." He recognized the drastic situation his division, and the entire army, faced that late afternoon. "For a moment I thought the day was lost," he testified, "...because, so far as I could see, the crest in my rear was vacant...." Recognizing how lightly defended Cemetery Ridge was, he faced the daunting task of slowing the Confederate advance, while retreating across an open field, against superior numbers and with both of his flanks unsupported. The general also understood the danger of ordering a more rapid retreat, stating:

I did not order my troops to fall back rapidly... and I knew that when troops got to moving back rapidly it was exceedingly difficult to stop them just where you wanted to stop them.<sup>186</sup>

Thus, having no choice, Humphreys conducted a deliberate withdrawal, "retiring very slowly, continuing the contest with the enemy, whose fire of artillery and infantry was destructive in the extreme" down the east slope of the Emmitsburg Road Ridge and toward the Plum Run swale. He described this maneuver in a letter to his wife, writing, "Twenty times did I [bring] my men to a halt & face about, myself & Harry [his son] and others of my staff forcing the men to do it." While successfully executed, it cost his division dearly, for he lost nearly 2,100 of its 4,900 officers and men, or more than 42 percent. Humphreys later recalled, "the path along which I moved back...was literally strewn with dead and wounded...."<sup>187</sup>

Humphreys' accounts do not mesh with those from Barksdale's brigade, who remembered their attack much differently. "As our on-rushing line sped down the slope of Peach Orchard hill," remembered one Mississippian, "many of the enemy were outstripped and left behind as prisoners." Another description, while mentioning stout Union resistance, still implies that Barksdale's advance was rather swift:

At points of the defense the enemy's infantry was covered by stone fences and farm buildings. Their deadliest fire was at such places. Only the speed of our charge across the fiery furnace prevented a greater loss.<sup>188</sup>

The elation of their success, along with changing post-war memories, probably best explains the Confederate versions of Barksdale's attack. Whatever the speed of their advance, it is certain that the direction of Barksdale's brigade changed after overpowering the 11<sup>th</sup> New Jersey and 120<sup>th</sup> New York. This resulted from the convergence of Barksdale's brigade, which was moving north, and Wilcox's brigade, advancing from the west. Each brigade shifted its advance to a more east/northeast direction, with Barksdale's regiments eventually crossing the open ground north of the Abraham Trostle farmstead. This in turn forced Humphreys' division to fall back to its right-rear, or also toward the northeast. Thus, with Wofford's brigade moving directly east from the Peach Orchard and Barksdale advancing to the northeast, the initial gap separating the two 3<sup>rd</sup> Corps' wings continued to grow larger. As a result very few Union troops retreated directly back to the section of Cemetery Ridge which was lightly defended.<sup>189</sup>

Barksdale must have seen, or at least sensed, the opportunity before him, as the bulk of his brigade moved directly toward that gap in the Union line. He pushed his men hard, shouting repeatedly, "Forward, men, forward." At some point during the latter part of his advance, Barksdale was wounded. One Mississippian noted the general "reeled but did not halt."<sup>190</sup>

By the time the brigade neared Plum Run swale it had advanced nearly a mile and had broken two Union lines. Its formations, not surprisingly, were disorganized, so much in fact that, according to one member of the brigade:





As the bulk of Barksdale's brigade moved toward Plum Run, significant action was also taking place to its south (between the Abraham Trostle farmstead and the Wheatfield road). Because of the divergence of Barksdale's and Wofford's brigades (as explained earlier) only a small number of troops from the earlier struggle at Peach Orchard ended up moving through this area. These were the Union batteries along the Wheatfield road (Hart, Clark, Phillips, and Bigelow) and the 21<sup>st</sup> Mississippi.<sup>194</sup>

As discussed above, Bigelow's 9<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Battery was the last of the artillery from the Peach Orchard area to fall back when Sickles' line collapsed. Pressured from two directions, this untested unit had managed to conduct a time-consuming and technically difficult maneuver, "retire by prolonge firing," in an attempt to save themselves and their guns. Their main pursuers were Col. Benjamin Humphreys' 21<sup>st</sup> Mississippi, the last of Barksdale's regiments, which had earlier peeled off from its brigade in order to capture these vulnerable Union cannons. Both of these units were thus moving through this critical area that led to the central part of the dangerous opening on Cemetery Ridge.<sup>195</sup>

Despite their inexperience, and after what must have seemed an eternity, the battery finally reached the Trostle house. They halted under cover of a slight rise of ground, which gave the battery a slight reprieve. Captain Bigelow's intention was "to gain the high ground in my rear" along Cemetery Ridge. He therefore issued "the necessary orders for the movement" at which point the men eagerly "began to limber up, hoping to get out and back to our lines before they closed in on us...." The men must have felt extremely lucky to not only save their guns, but also their lives as well.<sup>196</sup>

As Bigelow's men scrambled to limber the guns, Lt. Col. Freeman McGilvery galloped toward the rear in order to regroup and reorganize his other batteries on Cemetery Ridge. After splashing across Plum Run and reaching the higher ground beyond, however, he was shocked by the situation that confronted him. Expecting to find infantry onto which he could rally his batteries, McGilvery instead found that the 3<sup>rd</sup> Corps "had left the field" and that Cemetery Ridge was fearfully unprotected. He had discovered the critical gap along the left center of the Union line that might spell disaster for the Army of the Potomac. McGilvery concisely summed up this moment in his official report, writing, "The crisis of the engagement had now arrived."<sup>197</sup>

Instantly realizing the danger the gap represented, McGilvery acted swiftly to close it. A new line had to be established immediately, yet he faced numerous obstacles that made the task seem impossible. The primary difficulty was that the only units immediately available to McGilvery were his own damaged and worn gun crews from the Peach Orchard and the other batteries retreating through the area. Again, artillery had to stand alone. Making matters worse was that since McGilvery would rally the last batteries to retreat, they would be in the worst shape. The chance of holding back the hard-charging Confederate line with such limited resources was not good, and McGilvery knew it. Despite these odds, however, he was "determined to sacrifice his Batteries, if necessary, in an effort to stay the enemy's advance into the opening in the Lines...."<sup>198</sup>

The artillery colonel immediately proved this last sentiment true, for a means of buying more time was suddenly presented to him. He spotted the 9<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Battery, which had just halted near the Trostle farmstead and was beginning to limber up. Without hesitation, McGilvery spurred his horse, galloping "alone, in the midst of flying missiles," toward the battery. Luckily, he came through the fire unscathed, though his horse staggered, being "shot four times in the breast and fore shoulder." Indeed, Captain Bigelow recalled the animal was "riddled with bullets," yet somehow managed to keep going. McGilvery finally reined up in front of the captain and gave him new orders:

Captain Bigelow, there is not an infantryman back along the whole line which Sickles' moved out; you must remain where you are and hold your position at all

hazards, if need be, until at least I can find some batteries to put in position and cover you.<sup>199</sup>

One can only guess at the thoughts and feelings of dread, hopelessness, and despair that went through the minds of Bigelow's men upon hearing this order. The battery had done everything that had been asked or could be expected of it. The men had performed nearly impossible feats during the last hour and a half of brutal combat. This was especially impressive considering they had never before been under fire. Yet McGilvery, an officer they had known less than a week, had ordered their literal destruction. It was a complete reversal of the hopes the men held, just moments before, of escaping. Even Bigelow, a combat veteran, was stunned by the order and managed a weak reply of, "I would try to do so." He later described their desperate situation:

The task seemed superhuman, for the knoll already spoken of allowed the enemy to approach as it were under cover within 50 yards of my front, while I was very much cramped for room and my ammunition was greatly reduced.<sup>200</sup>

The final desperate stand of the 9<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Battery was an extraordinary display of leadership, bravery and, above all, incredible discipline. Fighting in its first battle, the battery now found itself literally crammed into the corner of the stone walls with only a narrow gateway offering an escape route. Even worse, the battery was without support, low on ammunition, facing greatly superior numbers and had a severely limited field of fire. Bigelow called the "position...an impossible one for artillery." Despite the odds, the men immediately obeyed Bigelow's orders to unlimber and prepare for action while McGilvery rode back beyond Plum Run to establish his new line.<sup>201</sup>

Realizing desperate circumstances required desperate actions, Bigelow took chances. Risking the danger to his own men, the captain ordered all the ammunition from the caissons laid beside the guns for "rapid firing." He then sent the caissons to the rear. Utilizing every means possible to slow the advancing 21<sup>st</sup> Mississippi, he then ordered his four guns in the center and right sections, to "commence...firing solid shot low, for a ricochet over the knoll" and into the enemy beyond. Then, with his six Napoleons loaded and arranged in a semicircle, with the limbers and horses crowded into the corner of the stone walls, the battery fell silent to await the onslaught. Though "moments seemed like hours," Bigelow recalled the preparations were completed "not a moment to soon...for almost immediately the enemy appeared over the knoll" and the battery "became heavily engaged."<sup>202</sup>

Attacked from two directions, Kershaw's skirmishers from the left and the 21<sup>st</sup> Mississippi from the center and right, the battery stood its ground, as Bigelow recalled:

Waiting till they were breast high, my battery was discharged at them every gun loaded...with double shotted canister and solid shot, after which through the smoke [we] caught a glimpse of the enemy, they were torn and broken, but still advancing....<sup>203</sup>

Despite this terrible fire, the 21<sup>st</sup> Mississippi, along with Kershaw's skirmishers, quickly rallied and, according to Bigelow, they "opened a fearful musketry fire, men and horses were falling like hail..." Flushed with victory, the Mississippians pushed onward, "yelling like demons," as "Again and again they rallied." Bigelow remembered:

The enemy crowded to the very muzzles of [the guns]...but were blown away by the canister. Sergeant after Sergt., was struck down, horses were plunging and laying about all around, bullets now came in on all sides, for the enemy had turned my flanks. The air was dark with smoke...yet my men kept up a rapid

fire.... Notwithstanding their insane, reckless efforts, not an enemy came into [the] battery from its front.<sup>204</sup>

As this struggle continued, however, the situation grew worse for the battery. Bigelow recounted how the “rapid fire recoiled the guns into the corner of the stone-wall,” which “more and more cramped my position.” As ammunition began to run low the captain, still willing to take risks, ordered case shot fired with the fuses cut short “so that they would explode near the muzzle of [the] guns.” Lastly, though the battery’s front was secure, the Confederate “lines extended far beyond our right flank,” the captain wrote, “and the 21<sup>st</sup> Miss.,... swung without opposition and came in from that direction, pouring in a heavy fire all the while”<sup>205</sup>

Sensing the end was near the captain ordered his two left guns to limber up and escape. As the first gun reached the lane it overturned, blocking the gateway. While the men of this gun scrambled to right it, the crew of the trailing gun looked in desperation for a way out. A few men “tumbled the top stones off the wall” before the drivers headed “directly over the wall.” Bugler Charles Reed remembered later “the horses jumping and the gun... going over with a tilt on one side and then a crash of rocks and wheels.” Amazingly the cannon remained upright made a successful escape.<sup>206</sup>

Hoping to save whatever he could Bigelow, trailed by Bugler Reed, “rode down to the stone wall” and ordered his cannoneers to “make a better opening” for the remaining four guns. But with the left section gone, Kershaw’s skirmishers “being unchecked, quickly came up on [the] left and poured in a murderous fire.” Six Confederates fired and the captain “caught two bullets, my horse two, two flew wide.”<sup>207</sup>

Bigelow fell near the wall dazed, but Reed and Bigelow’s orderly were quickly at their commander’s side. As he “drew himself back to the stone wall” Bigelow recalled seeing “the Confederates swarming in on our right flank.” Hand-to-hand fighting engulfed the battery as the men began to use handspikes and rammers to defend their guns. Bigelow also remembered seeing Confederates “standing on the limber chests, and shooting down cannoneers” from behind. Realizing that “Longer delay was impossible” the captain told Reed to sound “Retreat.” The battery’s tenacious stand had lasted more than twenty minutes, but it had come at a steep price.<sup>208</sup>

The 9<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Battery was shattered, losing three of four officers, six of eight sergeants, nineteen enlisted, eighty horses and four of its six guns. They had sacrificed themselves just as they had been ordered to do, yet it was not a sacrifice made in vain. As Bigelow “glanced anxiously to the rear” he “saw the longed for batteries just coming into position.” McGilvery’s new artillery line was nearly completed.<sup>209</sup>

As the remainder of the battery scattered to the rear, Charles Reed remembered Bigelow “told... the orderly and myself to leave him and get out as best we could.” Instead, the bugler disobeyed orders, staying with his wounded captain, helped him mount another horse and then, “taking the reins of both horses in his left hand, with his right hand supporting me in the saddle, took me at a walk [to the rear].”<sup>210</sup>

Reed led both horses, at a walk, across nearly 400 yards of open ground and toward McGilvery’s new line of artillery, located on a slight rise just beyond Plum Run. Although caught between the fire of the opposing lines, Reed managed to both keep his wounded commander upright and control both horses. Miraculously Reed was able to safely guide both horses to and beyond McGilvery’s line of guns, an act of courage for which he later would be awarded the Medal of Honor. Bigelow recalled, “When I was taken to the rear, the... guns gotten into position by [Lt. Col.] McGilvery, without a single infantry man as far as I could see on their right or left as supports, were all the troops that were holding our lines....”<sup>211</sup>

Col. Benjamin Humphreys of the 21<sup>st</sup> Mississippi, who would soon see this new artillery line forming, described the last chaotic moments as his regiment swarmed over Bigelow’s guns:

...Lieut. George Kempton...[was] astraddle of a gun waving his sword and exclaiming, "Colonel, I claim this gun for Company I." Lieut. W. P. McNeily was astraddle of another, claiming it for Company E. I now wanted to rejoin the brigade.<sup>212</sup>



*Timothy O'Sullivan photographed the wreckage of the 9<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Battery in front of the Trostle barn on July 6, 1863. LC*

"Just then," Colonel Humphreys recalled, "I discovered another battery of five guns wheeling into position" about 250 yards "up the opposite slope...."<sup>213</sup>

This was Battery I, 5<sup>th</sup> United States Artillery, commanded by Lt. Malbone Watson, and consisted of four 3-inch rifles. It marked the left end of McGilvery's newly formed "Plum Run Line," which he had been hastily assembling as Bigelow's battery sacrificed itself in the Trostle farmyard. This patchwork line of guns was located along a small rise just east of Plum Run.<sup>214</sup>

Working almost entirely unassisted and being "the only officer" in the area, McGilvery had, with or without orders, assumed increased authority. When the 6<sup>th</sup> Maine Battery, of the Artillery Reserve, trotted up from the rear, its commander, Lt. Edwin Dow, reported that "McGilvery ordered me into position...remarking that he had charge of the artillery of the Third Corps." McGilvery apparently used the same tactic with Watson's battery, from the 5<sup>th</sup> Corps. Capt. Augustus Martin, commanding the 5<sup>th</sup> Corps artillery, stated hotly in his report that Watson was "ordered...by an officer of General Sickles' staff, who had orders to take any batteries he could find, no matter where they belonged." Of course, "officially" McGilvery had nothing to do with the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> Corps, yet alone assume authority over their batteries. Martin complained this action

deprived his corps “of its proper amount of artillery.” McGilvery, however, felt such measures were justified because of the emergency he faced. He had to have immediate obedience from whatever nearby artillery he could commandeer to create this new line. Thus, in a very short time, McGilvery had managed to pull together an artillery line from batteries belonging to the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Corps, along with others from the Artillery Reserve.<sup>215</sup>

The line was weak, varying between seven to seventeen guns, and possibly more. His initial line consisted of, from left to right, four guns of Watson’s Battery I, 5<sup>th</sup> U. S., Dow’s four Napoleons of the 6<sup>th</sup> Maine Battery, three guns from Captain Phillip’s battery and two from Captain Thompson’s battery, and covered a front of approximately 400 yards. Thus half of the initial batteries, and five of the thirteen guns, belonged to McGilvery’s own battered brigade, which had just completed its withdrawal from the Peach Orchard. The strength of the line would change, however, as new batteries arrived and others retired. As an example, Captain James McKay Rorty’s Battery B, 1<sup>st</sup> New York, belonging to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Corps, joined McGilvery’s line a little later and went into position on Thompson’s right.<sup>216</sup>

The “Plum Run Line” faced two distinct threats: three complete or partial infantry brigades, and Colonel Alexander’s Confederate batteries on the Peach Orchard Knoll and Emmitsburg Road Ridge, approximately 1,500 yards to the west. The infantry consisted of the brigades of, from south to north, Wofford, Barksdale, and Wilcox, approximately 4,500 strong (minus earlier battle casualties). The most dangerous threat was obviously this approaching infantry, so McGilvery directed his batteries to concentrate on them and ignore the incoming artillery fire. Lieutenant Dow reported:

On going into position my battery was under a heavy fire from two batteries of the enemy.... I replied to them with solid shot and shell until the enemy’s skirmishers...came out of the woods to the left front of my position and poured a continual stream of bullets at us. I soon discovered a battle line of the enemy coming through the wood about 600 yards distant, evidently with a design to drive through and take possession of the road to Taneytown, directly in my rear. I immediately opened up them with spherical case and canister.... Their artillery, to which we paid no attention, had gotten our exact range, and gave us a warm greeting.<sup>217</sup>

Once the Confederate infantry reached Plum Run swale they began to rake McGilvery’s batteries with rifle fire. “A brook, running through low bushes parallel to our front,” McGilvery reported, “...was occupied by rebel sharpshooters.... I ordered canister to be used on the low bushes in front....” Lieutenant Dow later recalled, “the Confederates were keeping up a terrific fire all the time....” He also stated that what “saved me was that I had a whole lot of canister.”<sup>218</sup>

Despite the batteries’ best efforts, the situation appeared grim for the artillery crews. The 21<sup>st</sup> Mississippi, regrouped after overwhelming Bigelow’s battery and the regiment’s commander, Colonel Humphreys recalled, “I at once ordered a charge....” Whipped into a frenzy by its success, the regiment, despite its fierce struggle with Bigelow’s gunners and the resultant casualties, immediately responded to its colonel’s orders. “On the brave regiment moved—yelling and firing,” Humphreys proudly recalled later.<sup>219</sup>

Their target was Lt. Watson’s Battery I, 5<sup>th</sup> U.S. Artillery. The regulars “poured canister, some twenty rounds” into the approaching Mississippians, before coming under a killing musketry fire. Watson was wounded and so many of his “men and horses were shot down or disabled...that the battery was abandoned.”<sup>220</sup>

With the capture of Watson’s four guns, the 21<sup>st</sup> Mississippi completed an amazingly successful assault. They had advanced for more than a mile, broken at least two lines of Union infantry, captured numerous prisoners, including a brigadier general, and had overrun two batteries totaling eight guns. “In circumstance and effect,” one veteran of the regiment proudly

stated, “the capture of these two batteries by a single regiment was an unexcelled, if ever equaled, achievement.”<sup>221</sup>

Colonel Humphreys later recounted his situation just after overwhelming Watson’s guns:

Far to my right I could see fugitives seeking Round Top, from which compact masses were firing from every crag—on Hood and Kershaw. Far to my left I could see the enemies lines rallied and fighting Barksdale. I endeavored to turn my *captured* batteries on these lines, but the Federals had carried off rammers and friction wires.

Feeling he was on the brink of great victory, Humphreys also stated, “No other guns or a solitary soldier could be seen before us. The Fed[eral] Army was [cut] in twain.”<sup>222</sup>

*“...we saved the line from being broken.”*<sup>223</sup>

Bugler Charles Wellington Reed, 9<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Battery

McGilvery’s situation at that moment certainly seemed to verify Colonel Humphreys’ attitude. Having already lost Watson’s guns, he watched as Captain Thompson’s two guns, having run low on ammunition, and Captain Rorty’s guns retired. At its lowest point, McGilvery’s line fell to just seven guns (Lieutenant Dow’s four Napoleons and Captain Phillips’ three 3-inch rifles). Dow reported, “It was evidently their intention, after capturing...Company I, Fifth Regulars, to have charged right through our lines to the Taneytown road, isolating our left wing and dividing our army.”<sup>224</sup>

Throughout this crisis McGilvery remained active along his line, directing fire, shifting batteries for maximum effect and seeking reinforcements. He obviously realized how critical the situation was, as it seemed doubtful that his line could hang on until reinforcements arrived to close the gap. He also constantly gave the battery commanders here the same orders he had given Captain Bigelow earlier. Lieutenant Dow remembered, “At this crisis, my orders from [Lt. Col.] McGilvery were to hold my position at all hazards until he could re-enforce the position and relieve me.”<sup>225</sup>

McGilvery’s efforts paid great dividends, for he was able to slow the approaching Confederate lines. One Mississippian in Barksdale’s ranks recalled, “Thinned by the storm which swept down with such terrific fury from the ridge, the advance line staggered and began to waver,” in Plum Run swale. Even Wilcox’s Alabama Brigade, facing the right end of McGilvery’s line, was affected by this fire. Wilcox reported the situation when his men reached the same swale, writing:

Beyond this, the ground rose rapidly for some 200 yards, and upon this ridge were numerous batteries of the enemy.... From the batteries on the ridge...grape and canister were poured into our ranks.<sup>226</sup>

This fire, despite its dwindling strength, slowed the disorganized Confederate brigades. McGilvery also took advantage of the growing darkness, smoke, confusion, and the terrain to further delay Wofford, Barksdale, and Wilcox. In his official report, Lieutenant Down stated:

...owing to the prompt and skillful action of [Lt. Col.] Freeman McGilvery in forming this second line...their plan was foiled, for they no doubt thought the woods in our rear were filled with infantry in support of the batteries, when the fact is we had no support at all.<sup>227</sup>

For more than an hour in the increasing twilight, McGilvery's thin line covered the dangerous gap along Cemetery Ridge, eventually accomplishing exactly what he had intended. One of the highest compliments came from a man McGilvery had ordered to sacrifice his command: Capt. John Bigelow, who later praised his commander, writing:

Without an aide or an orderly...he was the only field officer who realized and tried to remedy the situation. He was fearless, having his horse shot several times, and was untiring in keeping the enemy from discovering the ever widening and unprotected gap in our lines.... He gave new courage to the officers of these [batteries] and placed and maneuvered them...in many different positions, checking every advance....<sup>228</sup>

Lieutenant Dow wrote in his official report, "I deem it due to [Lt. Col.] McGilvery to say he was ever present, riding up and down the line in the thickest of the fire, encouraging the men by his words and dashing example...."<sup>229</sup>

Infantry reinforcements began to arrive, providing support for the batteries and eventually launching counterattacks against the Confederates threatening the gap. McGilvery must have realized immediately the near-miracle he and his gun crews had accomplished that day. Later that month, he wrote to the governor of Maine, Abner Coburn, and stated, "at Gettysburg...I believe I did as much as almost any Officer to save our army from a defeat on the 2d of July...."<sup>230</sup>

The first of these reinforcements to arrive was Col. George L. Willard's 2<sup>nd</sup> Corps brigade. His four New York regiments numbered approximately 1,500. Following a rapid march of nearly three-quarters of a mile the brigade halted and formed its battle line off to McGilvery's right rear or directly in front of Barksdale's regiments northeast of the Trostle farm. Willard then ordered three of his regiments to charge Barksdale in the Plum Run swale. At that same moment Barksdale was still attempting to re-form his scattered ranks in preparation for continuing his advance. Suddenly, one of his veterans later recalled seeing, through the smoke, "A heavy line of Blue Coats...rises up as if from the earth, and is moving down upon them."<sup>231</sup>

Willard's regiments slammed into Barksdale's line and a "short but terrible contest ensued in the bushes in the swale," remembered Capt. Charles Richardson, of the 126<sup>th</sup> New York. Willard's men "met the advancing rebels at the muzzles of their muskets and the points of their bayonets...." The exhausted Confederates fought on, "contesting every inch of ground."<sup>232</sup>

The Confederate line eventually began to break, with some falling to the rear and others surrendering. Barksdale, in the thick of the melee, recklessly exposed himself as he rode amongst his men to inspire them. Captain Richardson spotted the Confederate commander, writing, "Gen. Barksdale was trying to hold his men, cheering them and swearing, directly in front of the left of the 126<sup>th</sup> [New York] near the right of the 125<sup>th</sup> [New York] who both saw and heard him as they emerged from the bushes" in the swale. At this point Richardson wrote, Barksdale "was almost frantic with rage, he was trying to make his fleeing men stand." The conspicuous Southern general was an obvious target, as the New York captain recalled, "immediately several from both regiments fired at him and he fell hit by several bullets." As the Union line swept forward, Richardson remembered "a corporal in my company...passed over his [Barksdale] body...."<sup>233</sup>

Barksdale's brigade, already exhausted and weakened by its earlier advance, combat, and subsequent casualties, finally broke and fell back toward Sherfy's farmstead and orchards along the Emmitsburg road. Covering their withdrawal were Col. E. P. Alexander's batteries, located on the Peach Orchard Knoll, who blazed away at Willard's line as it appeared out of the thicket along Plum Run and then advanced beyond it. Capt. Aaron Seeley, of the 125<sup>th</sup> New York, reported, "we were met by a terrible storm of...canister" which opened at "fearfully short range, gashing the ranks with ghastly rents...." Colonel Alexander remembered his role during this phase of the July 2 struggle:

The artillery took part wherever it could, firing at everything in sight, and a sort of pell-mell fighting lasted until darkness covered the field and the fuses of the flying shells looked like little meteors in the air.<sup>234</sup>

Colonel Humphreys and his 21<sup>st</sup> Mississippi were still beyond Plum Run with the captured guns of Watson's battery. He later described his predicament:

...while arranging to return to Barksdale, I discovered a long Federal line marching from the direction of Cemetery Hill directly against me. Looking again to my right and rear I saw Wofford retiring towards the Peach Orchard. To my left...the 3 other regiments that were with him [Barksdale], were also retiring. I could see no other reenforcement coming, and determined to retire to the stone wall where I captured...4 guns [Bigelow's guns at the Trostle farmstead] —and there make a stand—where...I could control the ground on which I left the [4]...guns [from Watson's battery].<sup>235</sup>

The “long Federal line marching” toward Humphreys was actually the 39<sup>th</sup> New York, the last of Willard's brigade, who, responding to a call for help, advanced quickly and recaptured Watson's guns. Wofford's brigade, to Colonel Humphreys' right, had reached the foot of Little Round Top before being forced back by a counterattack of the Pennsylvania Reserves of Maj. Gen. Samuel Crawford's 5<sup>th</sup> Corps division. Colonel Humphreys' original intent was to “make a stand” at the Trostle farmstead, where, “hoping for reenforcements” he could “hold what we had gained....”<sup>236</sup>

Despite being forced to leave the captured guns from Watson's battery, Humphreys “felt the jubilation of the victor” over his success. His elation was short-lived, for “just at night” a courier from Longstreet arrived and “great to my mortification,” Humphreys later wrote, “I was ordered to fall back to the Peach Orchard.” Although he “demurred and protested” the “order was imperative” and thus Colonel Humphreys reluctantly ordered the 21<sup>st</sup> Mississippi, despite its overwhelming success, to fall back to the Peach Orchard Knoll, abandoning all eight of the guns it had captured, and thus leaving it very little to show for its courage and sacrifice.<sup>237</sup>

Lt. Gen. James Longstreet recalled this episode and pointed to it as an example of the attitude his men fought with that day, writing, “as illustrative of the dauntless spirit of these men...when [Col.] Humphreys...was ordered to withdraw his troops...he thought there was some mistake, and...he did so under protest. Our men had no thought of retreat.” Despite this overwhelming confidence in their fighting ability, in the end, their attack had been repulsed and the left end of the Union line had been stabilized. As Longstreet's assault sputtered to conclusion in deepening twilight of July 2, one of Army of Northern Virginia's best chances to win battle ended with it.<sup>238</sup>

This attack had resulted in some of the bloodiest fighting of the entire war. Through it all, the Peach Orchard area had greatly impacted the events of that day, from influencing the initial creation of the opposing battle line and the development of the opposing plans by various top commanders, its use as a prime artillery platform for both Union and Confederate batteries, to the tactical movement of troops over and around it throughout the four hours of combat that followed. These effects were not only felt in and around the Peach Orchard itself, but also the fighting from the extreme left flank of Army of the Potomac to the center of its battle line on Cemetery Ridge.

The Northern defenders of the Peach Orchard area were ultimately defeated, their position being overrun and the Peach Orchard occupied by Confederate forces. In the process these Union regiments and batteries lost heavily. A few examples starkly illustrate this point: Brig. Gen. Charles Graham's brigade, the primary defenders of the Peach Orchard, lost approximately 740



of its 1,500 men (nearly 49 percent), Col. Edward Bailey's 2<sup>nd</sup> New Hampshire suffered around 193 casualties (more than 54 percent), the losses of the 73<sup>rd</sup> New York numbered 162 out of 350 (more than 46 percent), and McGilvery's batteries experienced just more than 24 percent casualties (extremely high losses for that branch of service). Despite their defeat and excessive casualties, however, the actions of these officers and men, in the end, helped achieve a Union victory. Although driven from their original positions, they had fought on and, along with other reinforcements sent to Sickles' aid, assisted in repulsing a major Confederate assault, along with the eventual construction of a new and stronger Union battle line on Cemetery Ridge. Thus, the sacrifice of these officers and men was not in vain. In the words of Bugler Charles W. Reed of the 9<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Battery and future recipient of the Medal of Honor, "...we saved the line from being broken."<sup>239</sup>

For the Confederate troops who attacked the Peach Orchard that day, they were left with nothing but lingering doubts about lost opportunities. They indeed, had come perilously close to victory, yet in the end, had nothing to show for it. Making this bitter pill even harder to swallow were the terrible casualties they had suffered. The regiments composing Brig. Gen. Joseph Kershaw's left wing (2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion and 8<sup>th</sup> South Carolina) lost more than 35 percent of their men (approximately 320 out of 915). Brig. Gen. William Barksdale's intrepid Mississippi brigade suffered even worse, just less than 50 percent casualties, including the loss of three of the brigade's four regimental commanders. The worst loss of all, however, was Barksdale himself; mortally wounded and captured, dying unrepentantly early the next morning in a Union field hospital.<sup>240</sup>

Despite the discipline, devotion, and courage displayed by these men, they had ultimately failed. The general attitude of the rank-and-file was probably best summed by Robert Moore, of the 17<sup>th</sup> Mississippi, who wrote in his diary that night:

Had a desperate encounter with the enemy this evening for 2 hours. Drove them before us...but were forced to fall back for lack of support. Our loss was heavy... Several of them were my dear friends. Every man acted the hero. Miss. has lost many of her best & bravest sons. How thankful should all be to God who have escaped. Oh! the horrors of war.<sup>241</sup>

There were other victims of this struggle who are usually overlooked; the civilians on whose land this terrible struggle occurred. The best example, of course, were the owners of the orchard made famous by the battle described above; Joseph Sherfy and his family. According to a published family history:

On returning to their...home [on July 6] the Sherfy family witnessed a scene of destruction and desolation. The barn was in ashes; the house...was riddled with shot and shell; the fencing was down and much of it was gone, and the...peach orchard trees were nearly all destroyed.<sup>242</sup>

In addition they found the hog stable had been burned, the windmill damaged, their corn, oat, and grass crops destroyed, a spring wagon stolen, most of their livestock killed or stolen, and many personal possessions either destroyed or taken when their house was ransacked. Worse still were the trench graves in the yard and "where [the] batteries stood were heaps of dead horses" that littered their property. The family calculated the total damages at \$2,466.75, a substantial amount of money by mid-19<sup>th</sup> century standards. In spite of these nearly overwhelming losses, the Sherfys managed to stay and somehow rebuild, although the memory of the battle remained with them forever.<sup>243</sup>

Years later, Lt. Frank Moran of the 73<sup>rd</sup> New York, recalled the debris of battle strewn across the farmstead immediately after the fighting ended on July 2:

From right to left the field was strewn with all the terrible wreckage of battle.... Around...as well as on the slope...up which the Mississippi Brigade had advanced in the face of an incessant fire of musketry and artillery, the dead encumbered the ground. The poor horses had fared badly and as we passed scores of these ungazetted heroes stood upon their maimed limbs regarding us with a silent look of reproach that was almost human in expression.... The appalling sight of the dead and wounded of both sides...to the right of the Sherfy house, to and through the bloody Peach Orchard! Would that I could banish the recollections of the cruel sight!<sup>244</sup>

For the Union and Confederate soldiers who fought in and around the Peach Orchard that afternoon and early evening of July 2, 1863, they did not have the luxury in the immediate aftermath of the battle to ponder what the distant future might hold for them. Their thoughts were more basic and were probably summed up very well by Pvt. David Brett, of the 9<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Battery. Having survived his first battle, he attempted to explain the horrors of combat in a letter to his wife, writing simply, "...no one can guess how awful it is until he has been in a battle.... I for one do not want to get into another battle. I feel quite thankful that I am alive."<sup>245</sup>

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Nelson Ames, *History of Battery G, First Regiment, New York Light Artillery* (Marshalltown, Iowa: Marshall Printing Co., 1900), 66.

<sup>2</sup> John Bigelow, *The Peach Orchard* (Minneapolis: Kimball-Storer Co., 1910) 5-6, 32.

<sup>3</sup> Kathleen R. Georg, "The Sherfy Farm and the Battle of Gettysburg," unpublished study (Gettysburg National Military Park, 1977), 2-3 [Hereafter cited as GNMP]; John Sherfy Damage Claim, National Archives [Hereafter cited as NA], photocopy in GNMP. Sherfy was listed as a "Fruit dealer" in the 1860 Census and, according to his obituary, was a "pioneer in the peach business." While nearly all mid-19<sup>th</sup> century farms contained orchards, these were for consumption by the family and livestock and each usually consisted of a variety of fruit trees. Sherfy's orchards consisted entirely of peach trees. Sherfy's damage claim also listed the loss of corn, oats, and grass crops.

<sup>4</sup> Property Ownership Map, Historian's Office, GNMP; 1868-69 Warren Map; 1872 Corrected Warren Map; 1901 Park Commission Map; 1863 John Bachelder Isometric Map; Georg, "The Sherfy Farm," 6.

<sup>5</sup> Henry J. Hunt, "The Second Day at Gettysburg," Robert U. Johnson & Clarence C. Buel, eds., *Battle and Leaders of the Civil War*, (New York: The Century Co., 1884) 3, 296. [Hereafter cited as *Battles and Leaders*]; Property Ownership Map, Historian's Office, GNMP; 1868-69 Warren Map; 1872 Corrected Warren Map; 1901 Commission Map; 1863 John Bachelder Isometric Map.

<sup>6</sup> Edwin B. Coddington, *The Gettysburg Campaign, A Study in Command* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1968), 338.

<sup>7</sup> U. S. War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), Series 1, 27(1):115-116 [Hereafter cited as *OR*]; *OR*, Series 1, 27(2):318; Coddington, *The Gettysburg Campaign*, 326-327, 330-332, 333.

<sup>8</sup> *OR*, Series 1, 27(1):116; *OR*, Series 1, 27(2):308, 318, 352, 470, 504.

<sup>9</sup> *OR*, Series 1, 27(2):308.

<sup>10</sup> *OR*, Series 1, 27(1):368; *OR*, Series 1, 27(2):351; *Report of the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War, Army of the Potomac*, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1865), 438-439. [Hereafter cited as *JCCW*].

<sup>11</sup> *OR*, Series 1, 27(1): 2, 115-116; *OR*, Series 1, 27(3):486, 487; Coddington, *The Gettysburg Campaign*, 337-338; Brig. Gen. Gouverneur K. Warren testimony, *JCCW*, 377.

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<sup>12</sup> OR, Series 1, 27(2):308, 310.

<sup>13</sup> OR, Series 1, 27(2):309, 318-319, 358, 366-367, 614, 608; John W. Busey and David Martin, *Regimental Strengths and Losses at Gettysburg* (Hightstown, New Jersey: Longstreet House, 1994), 130, 172.

<sup>14</sup> OR, Series 1, 27(2):318, 608, 614; James Longstreet, "Lee in Pennsylvania," *Annals of War, Written by Leading Participants North and South* (n.p.: Times Publishing Co., 1879), 424. Most of this early-morning planning occurred at the grounds of Lutheran Theological Seminary, during which, at one point, Lee called over Maj. Gen. LaFayette McLaws, whose division was to lead Longstreet's march and then start the attack. McLaws remembered, "Gen. Lee, calling my attention to the map, said, '...I wish you to place your command in this position,' pointing to a place on the map, perpendicular to the Emmetsburg road...." See, LaFayette McLaws, "The Battle of Gettysburg," Read before the Confederate Veterans Association, April 27, 1896," unknown publisher, photocopy in GNMP, 69.

<sup>15</sup> OR, Series 1, 27(2):318.

<sup>16</sup> OR, Series 1, 2 (1):498, 500, 507, 515, 543, 575; OR, Series 1, 27(2):318, 350, 358; McLaws, "The Battle of Gettysburg," 69, 74; Lafayette McLaws, "Gettysburg," *Southern Historic Society Papers*, 7, (1879), 68-69 [Hereafter cited as *SHSP*]; Henry Tremain, *Two Days of War, A Gettysburg Narrative* (New York: Bonnell, Silver and Bowers, 1905), 37-38, 40, 43.

<sup>17</sup> Samuel R. Johnston to Fitz Lee, February 11, 1878 and Samuel R. Johnston to Lafayette McLaws, June 27, 1892, both in Samuel R. Johnston MSS, Freeman Collection, Library of Congress [Hereafter cited as LC]. (See also Fitzhugh Lee, "A Review of the First Two Days' Operations at Gettysburg and a Reply to General Longstreet," *SHSP*, 5, 183 – 184.

<sup>18</sup> Coddington, *The Gettysburg Campaign*, 373; Samuel Johnston to McLaws, as quoted in, McLaws, "The Battle of Gettysburg," 71-73; Samuel R. Johnston to Fitz Lee, February 11, 1878 and Samuel R. Johnston to Lafayette McLaws, June 27, 1892, both in Samuel R. Johnston MSS, Freeman Collection, LC. There is still debate today, more than 140 years later, as to how far Captain Johnston's reconnaissance actually got. Some historians doubt his claim that he actually reached the crest of Little Round Top.

<sup>19</sup> Samuel Johnston to McLaws, as quoted in, McLaws, "The Battle of Gettysburg," 71-73; Samuel R. Johnston to Fitz Lee, February 11, 1878 and Samuel R. Johnston to Lafayette McLaws, June 27, 1892, both in Samuel R. Johnston MSS, Freeman Collection, LC; A. L. Long, *Memoirs of Robert E. Lee* (New York: J. M. Stoddart & Co., 1887), 281. The quote is from A. L. Long, a member of Lee's staff.

<sup>20</sup> This notion is partially confirmed by Capt. B.C Manly, commanding a battery of artillery attached to Maj. Gen. McLaws' division. In his report, Manly wrote, "I was ordered to advance on a road that intersected at right angles the Emmitsburg road.... The road on which we moved [Millerstown Road] was perpendicular to the enemy's line, but it was supposed that their left did not extend to this point of intersection to which we were moving. My instructions were, if we gained this point, we would be on the enemy's left flank, and that I must form line on the left, and attempt to rake their line" (emphasis added). See, OR, Series 1, 27(2):380.

<sup>21</sup> James Longstreet, "Lee's Right Wing at Gettysburg," *Battles and Leaders*, 3, 340, 341.

<sup>22</sup> OR, Series 1, 27(2):308.

<sup>23</sup> OR, Series 1, 27(2):308.

<sup>24</sup> OR, Series 1, 27(2):318.

<sup>25</sup> OR, Series 1, 27(2):308; Longstreet, "Lee in Pennsylvania," *Annals of War*, 424.

<sup>26</sup> Douglass Southall Freeman, *Lee's Lieutenants: A Study in Command* (New York: Charles Scribner's & Sons, 1942), 3, 114; Longstreet, "Lee's Right Wing at Gettysburg," *Battles and Leaders*, 3, 340; James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1896), 365; McLaws, "Gettysburg," *SHSP*, 7, 69; McLaws, "The Battle of Gettysburg," 69; Joseph Kershaw, "Kershaw's Brigade at Gettysburg" *Battles and Leaders*, 3, 331. Laws' brigade reached the field around noon. See, OR, Series 1, 27(2):358 and E. M. Law, "The Struggle for 'Round Top'" *Battles and Leaders*, 3, 319.

<sup>27</sup> Kershaw, "Kershaw's Brigade at Gettysburg," *Battles and Leaders* 3, 332; OR, Series 1, 27(2):367. McLaws recalled a conversation with Longstreet just before they arrived opposite the Peach Orchard, writing, "General Longstreet...said, 'How are you going in?' and I replied, 'That will be determined when I can see what is in my front.' He said, 'There is nothing in your front; you will be entirely on the flank of the enemy.' I replied, 'Then I will continue my march...and after arriving on the flank as far as is necessary will face to the left and march on the enemy.' He replied, 'That suits me,' and rode away." See, McLaws, "Gettysburg," *SHSP*, 7, 69-70.

<sup>28</sup> B. G. Humphreys to McLaws, January 6, 1878, Lafayette McLaws Papers, Southern Historical Collection,

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University of North Carolina [Hereafter cited as SHC].

<sup>29</sup> *OR*, Series 1, 27(1):116.

<sup>30</sup> Sickles testimony, *JCCW*, 298.

<sup>31</sup> Sickles, "Reply by Daniel E. Sickles, Major-General, U.S.A.," *Battles and Leaders*, 3, 417.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*; Busey and Martin, *Regimental Strengths and Losses*, 46. Sickles felt it was important to hold the Emmitsburg road for the remainder of his 3<sup>rd</sup> Corps (two brigades of infantry, two artillery batteries, and the corps ammunition train), which were still in Emmitsburg early that morning would use the road to reach the battlefield. See, Hunt, testimony before the *JCCW*, 449.

<sup>33</sup> Sickles, "Reply of Daniel E. Sickles," *Battles and Leaders*, 3, 417-418; Sickles testimony, *JCCW*, 298; Meade testimony, *JCCW*, 332.

<sup>34</sup> Sickles testimony, *JCCW*, 297-298; Henry Tremain, *Two Days of War*, 48, 49, 51.

<sup>35</sup> Sickles testimony, *JCCW*, 298-299; *OR*, Series 1, 27(1):528, 550, 558, 581; A. A. Humphreys testimony, *JCCW*, 391.

<sup>36</sup> The most detailed and thorough study written on this episode is Richard A. Sauers, *A Caspian Sea of Ink: The Meade-Sickles Controversy* (Baltimore: Butternut and Blue, 1989).

<sup>37</sup> Coddington, *Gettysburg Campaign*, 343-358, 385-386.

<sup>38</sup> Ames, *History of Battery G*, 66, 69.

<sup>39</sup> Long, *Memoirs of Robert E. Lee*, 283.

<sup>40</sup> Coddington, *Gettysburg Campaign*, 385-386; 497, 499, 500, 502, 504; Busey and Martin, *Regimental Strengths and Losses*, 245.

<sup>41</sup> *OR*, Series 1, 27(1):582-584, 585, 586, 589-590; Busey and Martin, *Regimental Strengths*, 55. Clark's battery was armed with six 10-lb. Parrott Rifles. One section of Bucklyn's battery was detached and placed among the buildings of the Sherfy farmstead, see *OR*, Series 1, 27(1):590.

<sup>42</sup> *OR*, Series 1, 27(1):582-584, 585, 586, 589-590; Sickles testimony, *JCCW*, 299.

<sup>43</sup> McLaws, "The Battle of Gettysburg," 75; McLaws, "Gettysburg," *SHSP*, 7, 70.

<sup>44</sup> McLaws, "The Battle of Gettysburg," 77. Longstreet actually gave McLaws three orders to advance against the Peach Orchard during this time. See McLaws, "Gettysburg," *SHSP*, 7, 72.

<sup>45</sup> McLaws, "The Battle of Gettysburg," 76, 77.

<sup>46</sup> Longstreet, "Lee in Pennsylvania," *Annals of War*, 424; B. G. Humphreys to McLaws, January 8, 1878, SHC. McLaws later recounted that orders were given "to all brigades of my command...to incline to their left as they advanced—this under the supposition that we would be entirely on the flank of the enemy. ...[T]his...order had been given by Gen. Longstreet, without my knowledge, for each brigade to incline to the left as they went forward..." See, McLaws, "The Battle of Gettysburg," 79.

<sup>47</sup> J. B. Kershaw to John Bachelder, March 20, 1876, in David and Audrey Ladd, eds., *The Bachelder Papers, Gettysburg in Their Own Words* (Dayton, Ohio: Morningside Press, 1994) 1: 455. [Hereafter cited as *BP*]. In an article Kershaw wrote for *Battles and Leaders*, he stated "I was directed to commence the attack as soon as General Hood became engaged, swinging around toward the Peach Orchard..." Kershaw, "Kershaw's Brigade at Gettysburg," *Battles and Leaders*, 3, 333.

<sup>48</sup> McLaws, "Longstreet at Gettysburg," *Philadelphia Weekly Press*, February 17, 1888. The approximate strength of each brigade was as follows: Kershaw, 2200; Barksdale, 1620; Semmes, 1330; Wofford, 1630. See, Busey and Martin, *Regimental Strengths*, 117. Both Semmes and Wofford were positioned approximately 200 yards in the rear.

<sup>49</sup> *OR*, Series 1, 27(1):585.

<sup>50</sup> *OR*, Series 1, 27(2):379, 380.

<sup>51</sup> Sickles' testimony, *JCCW*, 299; Meade testimony, *JCCW*, 332; Tremain, *Two Days of War*, 63.

<sup>52</sup> Meade testimony, *JCCW*, 332; Sickles' testimony, *JCCW*, 299.

<sup>53</sup> *OR*, Series 1, 27(1):116, 234; Meade testimony, *JCCW*, 332; Sickles' testimony, *JCCW*, 299, 450.

<sup>54</sup> Busey and Martin, *Regimental Strengths*, 111-117.

<sup>55</sup> Gary W. Gallagher, ed., *Fighting for the Confederacy, The Personal Recollections of General Edward Porter Alexander* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 238; Busey and Martin, *Regimental Strengths*, 136, 142, 149; *OR*, Series 1, 27(2):374-375; Gettysburg National Military Park battalion and battery tablets. Although Alexander normally commanded a battalion (six batteries, totaling 24 guns), he was placed in charge of all of the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps artillery that day. Feeling that Alexander was a better artillery tactician than Col. J. B. Walton (commanding the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps Reserve Artillery), Longstreet temporarily placed his younger officer in charge of all the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps artillery on the field that day. See *OR*,

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Series 1, 27(2):429. The “8 rifles, which I held...in reserve,” were Alexander’s reference to Lt. James Woolfolk’s Ashland (Virginia) battery (two Napoleons and two 20-lb. Parrotts) and Capt. T. C. Jordon’s Beford (Virginia) battery (four 3-inch Ordnance Rifles). Thus, Alexander actually held out six rifle pieces and two Napoleons. The most plausible explanation for holding these guns in reserve was Alexander’s initial confidence he could quickly overwhelm the Union batteries in the Peach Orchard area.

<sup>56</sup> Henry only used two of his four batteries, and thus eleven of his nineteen guns. For some unexplained reason he chose not to use Capt. William K. Bachman’s Charleston (South Carolina) battery (four Napoleons) or Capt. Hugh R. Garden’s Palmetto (South Carolina) battery (two Napoleons and two 10-lb. Parrotts). Harry Pfanz states that this was done due to lack of space along the front of Hood’s division, although there is no proof that this explanation is correct. See Harry Pfanz, *Gettysburg: The Second Day* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 160 and *OR*, Series 1, 27(2):428.

<sup>57</sup> John B. Bachelder, “Second Day’s Battle,” Map, (Endicott & Co., 1876) [Hereafter cited as Bachelder “Second Day’s Battle” Map]; Busey and Martin, *Regimental Strengths*, 136, 142, 149; *OR*, Series 1, 27(2):374-375; Gettysburg National Military Park battalion and battery tablets. Alexander placed Parker and Taylor south of Millertown Road and Moody and Gilbert to the north side of it. Carlton’s battery was actually divided into two sections which straddled Manly’s battery, probably in an effort to get his two 12-lb. Howitzers closer to the Peach Orchard. See, *OR*, Series 1, 27(2):384. The Confederate batteries were equipped as follows: Capt. A. C. Latham’s Branch Artillery (three Napoleons, one 12-lb. Howitzer, and one 6-lb. gun), Capt. James Reilly’s Rowan Artillery (two Napoleons, two 3-inch Ordnance Rifles, and two 10-lb. Parrots), Capt. J. C. Fraser’s Pulaski Artillery (two 3-inch Ordnance Rifles and two 10-lb. Parrots), Capt. E. S. McCarthy’s 1<sup>st</sup> Richmond Howitzers (two Napoleons and two 3-inch Ordnance Rifles), Capt. H. H. Carlton’s Troup Artillery (two 12-lb. Howitzers and two 10-lb. Parrots), Capt. B. C. Manly’s Battery A, 1<sup>st</sup> North Carolina Artillery (two Napoleons and two 3-inch Ordnance Rifles), Capt. W. W. Parker’s Virginia Battery (three 3-inch Ordnance Rifles and one 10-lb. Parrot), Capt. O. B. Taylor’s Virginia Battery (four Napoleons), Capt. George V. Moody’s Madison Light Artillery (four 24-lb. Howitzers), and Capt. S. C. Gilbert’s Brooks Artillery (four 12-lb. Howitzers).

<sup>58</sup> Gallagher, ed., *Fighting for the Confederacy*, 238. McCarthy apparently only used his two rifled guns while leaving his Napoleon section in reserve. See *OR*, Series 1, 27(2):379.

<sup>59</sup> Gallagher, ed., *Fighting for the Confederacy*, 238, 239. The only Union batteries positioned near the Peach Orchard when this fighting began were Clark’s and Bucklyn’s, totaling just twelve guns, thus they were outnumbered 3½ to 1.

<sup>60</sup> Gallagher, ed., *Fighting for the Confederacy*, 239.

<sup>61</sup> Michael Hanifen, *History of Battery B, First New Jersey Artillery* (Ottawa, Illinois: Republican-Times, Printers, 1905), 68-69.

<sup>62</sup> *OR*, Series 1, 27(1):900; Ames, *History of Battery G*, 65. Ames had been ordered to report to Maj. Gen. Sickles much earlier and had parked near the Abraham Trostle barn awaiting orders. He moved to the Peach Orchard between 3:30 and 4 P.M.

<sup>63</sup> *OR*, Series 1, 27(1):881, 886, 890; Baker, *History of the Ninth Mass. Battery* (South Framingham, Massachusetts: Lakeview Press, 1888), 52; *Instruction for Field Artillery*, prepared by Board of Artillery Officers (reprint, New York: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1968), 74-280. McGilvery’s batteries were equipped as follows: Bigelow’s 9<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts (six Napoleons), Phillips’ 5<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts (six 3-inch Ordnance Rifles), Hart’s 15<sup>th</sup> New York (four Napoleons), and Thompson’s Batteries C&F, 1<sup>st</sup> Pennsylvania (six 3-inch Ordnance Rifles). These guns, along with Clark’s battery, were probably dueling with the batteries of Capt. A. C. Latham, Capt. James Reilly, and Capt. J. C. Fraser.

<sup>64</sup> *OR*, Series 1, 27(1):881.

<sup>65</sup> John Gibbon, *Artillerist’s Manual* (reprint, Glendale, NY, Benchmark Publishing Co., Inc., 1970), 401.

<sup>66</sup> Eric Campbell, “A Grand Terrible Drama,” *From Gettysburg to Petersburg, The Civil War Letters of Charles Wellington Reed* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), 114. [Hereafter cited as Campbell, ed., “Grand Terrible Drama”]

<sup>67</sup> Ames, *History of Battery G*, 66.

<sup>68</sup> Hanifen, *History of Battery B*, 71.

<sup>69</sup> Andrew Reese to *Southern Banner*, August 8, 1863 (August 26, 1863 edition), Blake Collection, USAMHI.

<sup>70</sup> *OR*, Series 1, 27(2):375. Cabell commanded the artillery battalion attached to McLaws’ division.

<sup>71</sup> Gallagher, ed., *Fighting for the Confederacy*, 239-240.

- <sup>72</sup> George Lewis, *The History of Battery E, First Regiment Rhode Island Light Artillery* (Providence: Snow & Farnham, Printers, 1892), 207.
- <sup>73</sup> OR, Series 1, 27(1):590.
- <sup>74</sup> Campbell, ed., "*A Grand Terrible Drama*," 114; OR, Series 1, 27(1):881; Phillips to Bachelder, n. d., in Ladds, eds., *BP*, 1, 167.
- <sup>75</sup> OR, Series 1, 27(1):592-593, 600-601, 616, 634, 653. All of the 5<sup>th</sup> Corps troops sent to Sickles' support were assigned to Little Round Top, the Plum Run Valley, and the Wheatfield.
- <sup>76</sup> Busey and Martin, *Regimental Strengths*, 54; OR Series 1, 27(1):483, 532, 570; Hanifen, *History of Battery B*, 71. Further depleting A. A. Humphreys' strength was the assignment of the 5<sup>th</sup> New Jersey to the skirmish line. Col. Regis De Trobriand's brigade also suffered the loss of two regiments, the 40<sup>th</sup> New York being detached to fight in the Valley of Death near Devil's Den and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Michigan was ordered to the Peach Orchard. See OR, Series 1, 27(1):520, 532.
- <sup>77</sup> OR, Series 1, 27(1):576, 881; OR, Series 1, 27(2):403.
- <sup>78</sup> Ames, *History of Battery G*, 66-67.
- <sup>79</sup> OR, Series 1, 27(2):399, 401.
- <sup>80</sup> Ames, *History of Battery G*, 68.
- <sup>81</sup> John P. Nicholson, ed., *Pennsylvania at Gettysburg: Ceremonies at the Dedication of the Monuments Erected by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* (Harrisburg: Wm. Stanley Ray, State Printer, 1904), 2, 610-611. [Hereafter cited as *Pennsylvania at Gettysburg*.]
- <sup>82</sup> J. S. McNeily, "Barksdale's Mississippi Brigade at Gettysburg," *Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society* 14, (1914), 235. [Hereafter cited as *MHS*].
- <sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 238.
- <sup>84</sup> OR, Series 1, 27(1):573.
- <sup>85</sup> Brig. Gen. Charles Graham's record of service, written February 16, 1865, Letters Received by the Appointment, Commission and Personal Branch, Adjutant General's Office 1871-1894, RG 94, NA.
- <sup>86</sup> Busey and Martin, *Regimental Strengths*, 49; OR, Series 1, 27(1):497, 499, 500, 502; Bachelder "Second Day's Battle" Map.
- <sup>87</sup> "Address of Chaplain David Craft," at the dedication of the 141<sup>st</sup> Pennsylvania monument, September 12, 1889, in *Pennsylvania at Gettysburg*, 2, 686; OR, Series 1, 27(1):498; Busey and Martin, *Regimental Strengths*, 49, 54. Maj. John A. Danks, commanding the 63<sup>rd</sup> Pennsylvania, stated that his men had "exhausted" their ammunition, as the reason for ordering the withdrawal.
- <sup>88</sup> OR, Series 1, 27(1):573, 578; Martin A. Haynes, *A History of the Second Regiment, New Hampshire Volunteer Infantry* (Lakeport, New Hampshire: n. p., 1896), 170-171; Busey and Martin, *Regimental Strengths*, 54.
- <sup>89</sup> OR, Series 1, 27(1):507, 573; Busey and Martin, *Regimental Strengths*, 49, 50, 54, 55, 114, 117.
- <sup>90</sup> Hanifen, *History of Battery B*, 73.
- <sup>91</sup> Haynes, *History of the Second*, 174-175.
- <sup>92</sup> McNeily, "Barksdale's Brigade," *MHS*, 236; McLaws, "The Battle of Gettysburg," 78.
- <sup>93</sup> J. B. Kershaw, "Kershaw's Brigade at Gettysburg," *Battles and Leaders*, 3, 333.
- <sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 334.
- <sup>95</sup> McLaws, "Gettysburg," *SHSP*, 7, 73.
- <sup>96</sup> Kershaw, "Kershaw's Brigade at Gettysburg," *Battles and Leaders*, 3, 334-335.
- <sup>97</sup> OR, Series 1, 27(1):881-882.
- <sup>98</sup> Kershaw, "Kershaw's Brigade at Gettysburg," *Battles and Leaders*, 3, 335; OR, Series 1, 27(2):368; Alex McNeill letter to his wife, July 7, 183, transcription in 2<sup>nd</sup> South Carolina folder, Box 8, Blake Collection, USAHMI, photocopy in GNMP; John Cox, "The Battle of Gettysburg," *Confederate Veteran*, 21, 434. Cox was a member of the 2<sup>nd</sup> South Carolina.
- <sup>99</sup> Kershaw to Bachelder, March 20, 1876, Ladd, eds., *BP*, 1, 454-455. Semmes' brigade consisted of the 50<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 51<sup>st</sup>, and 53<sup>rd</sup> Georgia regiments from left to right and had a strength of approximately 1,330. See Busey and Martin, *Regimental Strengths*, 140.
- <sup>100</sup> Haynes, *History of the Second*, 175-177; OR, Series 1, 27(1):504-505, 507; Bailey to Bachelder, March 29, 1882 in Ladd, eds., *BP*, 2, 846; William Loring, "Fighting Them Over," *The National Tribune*, July 5, 1894; *Maine at Gettysburg, Report of Maine Commissioners* (Portland: Lakeside Press, 1898), 126-134; *Pennsylvania at Gettysburg*, 2, 685-686. As the only available sources are vague it is difficult to state exactly when the last two regiments arrived or how long they held this position. Even the monuments on

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the field are confusing, as the markers to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Maine and 2<sup>nd</sup> New Hampshire occupy nearly the same ground. Both of the 141<sup>st</sup> Pennsylvania monuments are located along the northern edge of the Peach Orchard, along the Wheatfield Road. Even more confusing is the monument for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Michigan, which is located at the southeast corner of the Peach Orchard, a position the unit never held.

<sup>101</sup> Kershaw to Bachelder, March 20, 1876 and April 3, 1876 in Ladd, ed., *BP*, 1, 455, 474-475.

<sup>102</sup> Bigelow, *Peach Orchard*, 54.

<sup>103</sup> *History of the Fifth Massachusetts Battery* (Boston: Luther E. Cowles, Publisher, 1902), 638; Kershaw to Bachelder, March 26, 1876 in Ladd, eds., *BP*, 1, 455; Bigelow, *Peach Orchard*, 54. As the 3<sup>rd</sup> Michigan had been stationed on the skirmish line in front of and between the Peach Orchard and Rose farm, it is easy to understand how Bigelow initially thought Kershaw's men were Union troops. Kershaw never saw the charge of his left wing, as he was with the right wing of his brigade on the Stony Hill.

<sup>104</sup> Kershaw, "Kershaw's Brigade at Gettysburg," *Battle Leaders*, 3, 335-336.

<sup>105</sup> Bigelow, *Peach Orchard*, 54.

<sup>106</sup> Kershaw, "Kershaw's Brigade at Gettysburg," *Battle Leaders*, 3, 335.

<sup>107</sup> Kershaw to Bachelder, April 3, 1876 in Ladd, eds., *BP*, 1, 475; Hanifen, *History of Battery B*, 75.

<sup>108</sup> Bigelow, *Peach Orchard*, 55; *OR*, Series 1, 27(1):882.

<sup>109</sup> *OR*, Series 1, 27(1) 882; Campbell, ed., "A Grand Terrible Drama," 114; Frank Deane, ed., *My Dear Wife...The Civil War Letters of David Brett, 9<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Battery, Union Cannoneer*, 1, Soldier's Letters of the Great Strife (Little Rock, Arkansas: Pioneer, 1964), 63; Col. David Akien to unknown captain, unknown date, transcript, 7<sup>th</sup> South Carolina file, GNMP; Bigelow to Bachelder, n. d., in, Ladd, eds., *BP*, 1, 172.

<sup>110</sup> *OR*, Series 1, 27(1):369, 379-380, 393-399. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Corps division was commanded by Brig. Gen. John C. Caldwell.

<sup>111</sup> Hanifen, *History of Battery B*, 75.

<sup>112</sup> Haynes, *History of the Second*, 178-179.

<sup>113</sup> Busey and Martin, *Regimental Strengths*, 139, 141; McNeily, "Barksdale's Brigade," *MHS*, 235.

<sup>114</sup> B. G. Humphreys, "Biographical Sketch of William Barksdale," from J.F.H. Claiborne Papers, SHC; Lamar as quoted in, McLaws, "The Battle of Gettysburg," 79; McNeily, "Barksdale's Brigade," *MHS*, 236, 237-238; B. G. Humphreys, "Sunflower Guards," J.F.H. Claiborne Papers, SHC.

<sup>115</sup> Lamar as quoted in, McLaws, "The Battle of Gettysburg," 79.

<sup>116</sup> Judge George Clark, "Wilcox's Alabama Brigade at Gettysburg," *Confederate Veteran*, 17 (1909), 229.

<sup>117</sup> Haynes, *History of the Second*, 179.

<sup>118</sup> Humphreys to Bachelder, May 1, 1876, Ladd, eds., *BP*, 1, 480; McNeily, "Barksdale's Brigade," *MHS*, 236; Humphreys to McLaws, January 8, 1878, SHC.

<sup>119</sup> McNeily, "Barksdale's Brigade," *MHS*, 236; Bachelder, "Second Day's Battle" Map.

<sup>120</sup> Busey and Martin, *Regimental Strengths*, 49, 54, 55, 114, 117, 138, 139.

<sup>121</sup> These measurements assume that the infantry and artillery were formed per regulation spacing; infantry formed in double-ranked battle line with approximately 2 feet for each man and artillery, 14 yards between each gun. Thus the infantry should have covered a front of approximately 272 yards, while the ten cannon should have taken up approximately 118 yards. See Brig. Gen. Silas Casey, *Infantry Tactics* (1862, reprint, Dayton, Ohio: Morningside Press, 1985), 74-75 and Board of Artillery Officers, *Instruction for Field Artillery* (New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1884), 184-186.

<sup>122</sup> Bachelder, "Second Day's Battle" Map; Haynes, *History of the Second*, 170-171; *OR*, Series 1, 27(1):900. It is impossible to determine how many guns of Battery G, 1<sup>st</sup> New York faced to the west at this point in the engagement. At one time Captain Ames ordered the two guns of his right section to change front to the west to counter Confederate batteries in that direction. Therefore it is assumed those guns were still facing in that direction when Barksdale's brigade assaulted their position. See, *OR*, Series 1, 27(1):900-901 and Ames, *History of Battery G*, 70-71.

<sup>123</sup> *OR*, Series 1, 27(1):504-505; Ames, *History of Battery G*, 73-74. In his official report, Captain Ames stated that he had been relieved by Lt. Malbone Watson's Battery I, 5<sup>th</sup> U. S. Artillery. Over the years this became the standard interpretation and is reflected in most studies covering this part of the battle and even on the War Department markers and plaques placed on the field. Recent research has shown, however, that Battery I was probably never positioned in the Peach Orchard. Especially convincing is James Woods, "Defending Watson's Battery," in *The Gettysburg Magazine*, Issue 9, July 1993 (Dayton, Ohio: Morningside Press, 1993), 41-47. When Ames wrote his *History of Battery G* in 1900 he never mentioned

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any battery relieving him, yet alone Lt. Watson's Battery I.

<sup>124</sup> Haynes, *History of the Second*, 187.

<sup>125</sup> OR, Series 1, 27(1):499.

<sup>126</sup> Bailey to Bachelder, n. d., in Ladd, eds. *BP*, 2, 846.

<sup>127</sup> Haynes, *History of the Second*, 176, 179.

<sup>128</sup> Bailey to Bachelder, n. d. in Ladd, eds., *BP*, 2, 846; Casey, *Infantry Tactics*, 191-195; Haynes, *History of the Second*, 176, 179.

<sup>129</sup> OR, Series 1, 27(1):574.

<sup>130</sup> Haynes, *History of the Second*, 179, 180; Bailey to Bachelder, n. d., in Ladd, eds., *BP*, 2, 847.

<sup>131</sup> Haynes, *History of the Second*, 180.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 179, 180; OR, Series 1, 27(1):574. Henry N. Metcalf was a 28 year-old printer from Keene, New Hampshire when he enlisted in April 1861. See Haynes, *History of the Second*, "Roster" Appendix, 77.

<sup>133</sup> Busey and Martin, *Regimental Strengths*, 247; Haynes, *History of the Second*, 180.

<sup>134</sup> OR, Series 1, 27(1):508; Busey and Martin, *Regimental Strengths*, 245.

<sup>135</sup> Bachelder, "Second Day's Battle" Map; OR, Series 1, 27(1):497, 500-501, 502-503; Haynes, *History of the Second*, 170-171; Busey and Martin, *Regimental Strengths*, 49, 55, 114. Four of Bucklyn's Napoleons were positioned between the intersection and the Sherfy farmstead, while its other two guns were around the Sherfy buildings themselves. Thompson's other four guns were in the Peach Orchard fronting south.

<sup>136</sup> Bachelder, "Second Day's Battle" Map; Letter from unknown Georgia soldier, July 25, 1863, "Wofford's Georgia Brigade," *Richmond Daily Enquirer*, August 5, 1863; Busey and Martin, *Regimental Strengths*, 139, 141.

<sup>137</sup> Lewis, *History of Battery E*, 208-209.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 209.

<sup>139</sup> OR, Series 1, 27(1):502; *Pennsylvania at Gettysburg*, 2, 611, 612.

<sup>140</sup> OR, Series 1, 27(1):532-533, 559; Tremain, *Two Days of War*, 78-79; "Oration of Gen. Henry E. Tremain," at the dedication of the 73<sup>rd</sup> New York monument, September 6, 1897 in, New York Monuments Commission for the Battlefields of Gettysburg and Chattanooga. *Final Report on the Battlefield Gettysburg*, 3 vols. (Albany: J. B. Lyon Company, Printers, 1900), 2, 605. [Hereafter cited as *New York at Gettysburg*]. Tremain stated in his dedication speech that he was sent by Graham just as Barksdale's attack was starting. Sickles then sent Tremain on to Humphreys, with orders to detach a regiment.

<sup>141</sup> Edmund J. Raus, Jr., *A Generation on the March, The Union Army at Gettysburg* (Gettysburg, Pennsylvania: Thomas Publications, 1996), 72-73; Busey and Martin, *Regimental Strengths*, 53; Tremain, *Two Days of War*, 80-81; Francis Moran, "A New View of Gettysburg," *Philadelphia Weekly Times*, April 13, 1882; Francis Moran, "A Fire Zouave, Memoirs of a Member of the Excelsior Brigade" *National Tribune*, November 6 and November 13, 1890.

<sup>142</sup> Brig. Gen. Charles Graham's record of service, written February 16, 1865, Letters Received by the Appointment, Commission and Personal Branch, Adjutant General's Office 1871-1894, RG 94, NA.

<sup>143</sup> Haynes, *History of the Second*, 181.

<sup>144</sup> John Bigelow, *The Peach Orchard*, typescript of original text, Robert Blake Collection, USAHMI, 8.

<sup>145</sup> Humphreys, "Biographical Sketch of William Barksdale," J. F. H. Claiborne Papers, SHC; Moran, "A New View of Gettysburg," *Philadelphia Weekly Times*, April 13, 1882; Moran, "A Fire Zouave, Memoirs of a Member of the Excelsior Brigade" *National Tribune*, November 6 and November 13, 1890.

<sup>146</sup> OR, Series 1, 27(1):890.

<sup>147</sup> Busey and Martin, *Regimental Strengths*, 245-246; Humphreys, "Biographical Sketch of William Barksdale," J. F. H. Claiborne Papers, SHC; Graham's record of service, Letters Received by the Appointment, Commission and Personal Branch, Adjutant General's Office 1871-1894, NA. Graham's fall left him, according to his captors, "in a dazed state of mind." See McNeily, "Barksdale's Brigade," *MHS*, 237; Tremain, *Two Days of War*, 80-81; "Oration of Gen. Henry E. Tremain," in *New York at Gettysburg*, 2, 605.

<sup>148</sup> James Martin, et al., *History of the Fifty-Seventh Regiment, Pennsylvania Veteran Volunteer Infantry* (Reprint, Kearny, New Jersey: Belle Grove Publishing Co., 1995), 91.

<sup>149</sup> McNeily, "Barksdale's Brigade," *MHS*, 238. The officer was Maj. G. B. Gerald of the 18<sup>th</sup> Mississippi.

<sup>150</sup> "Address of Lieutenant-Colonel E. R. Bowen," *Pennsylvania at Gettysburg*, 2, 612.

<sup>151</sup> McNeily, "Barksdale's Brigade," *MHS*, 236-237.

<sup>152</sup> Martin, et al., *History of the Fifty-Seventh*, 91-92; "Address of Captain E. R. Strouss," *Pennsylvania at*



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Gettysburg, 1, 356.

<sup>153</sup> Kate M. Scott, *History of the One Hundred and Fifth Regiment of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: New-World Publishing Co., 1877), 82.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, 82, 83.

<sup>155</sup> J. C. Lloyd, 13<sup>th</sup> MS, as quoted in McNeily, "Barksdale's Brigade," *MHS*, 239; Humphreys to McLaws, January 6, 1878, SHC; Humphreys to Bachelder, May 1, 1876, in Ladd, eds., *BP*, 1, 480.

<sup>156</sup> Moran, "A Fire Zouave, Memoirs of a Member of the Excelsior Brigade," *National Tribune*, November 6 and November 13, 1890.

<sup>157</sup> Hanifen, *History of Battery B*, 76.

<sup>158</sup> *OR*, Series 1, 27(1):882.

<sup>159</sup> Campbell, ed., "Grand Terrible Drama," 114; Bigelow, *Peach Orchard*, 55.

<sup>160</sup> Humphreys to Bachelder, May 1, 1876 in Ladd, eds., *BP*, 1, 480; B. G. Humphreys to McLaws, January 6, 1878, SHC.

<sup>161</sup> *History of the Fifth*, 627, 630; Bigelow, *Peach Orchard*, 55; Phillips to Bachelder, n. d., Ladd, eds., *BP*, 1, 168.

<sup>162</sup> *History of the Fifth*, 624, 631.

<sup>163</sup> Phillips to Bachelder, n. d., in, Ladd, eds., *BP*, 1, 168; *OR*, Series 1, 27(1):882.

<sup>164</sup> Bigelow, *Peach Orchard*, 55; Bigelow to Park Commission, "Positions of Troops," 2, 32, GNMP Archives.

<sup>165</sup> Bigelow, *Peach Orchard*, 55-56; Campbell, ed., "A Grand Terrible Drama" 114-115; Baker, *History of the Ninth*, 61.

<sup>166</sup> Baker, *History of the Ninth*, 76, 214; Bigelow, *Peach Orchard*, 56.

<sup>167</sup> Bigelow, *Peach Orchard*, 16; Letter to the editors, dated July 25, 1863 by unknown soldier, "Wofford's Georgia Brigade," *Richmond Enquirer* (August 5, 1863 edition), GNMP. Wofford's brigade numbered approximately 1,400 and was aligned, from left to right, Phillip's Legion, Cobb's Legion, 16<sup>th</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup>, and 18<sup>th</sup> Georgia. See Busey and Martin, *Regimental Strengths*, 141.

<sup>168</sup> Letter to the editors, dated July 25, 1863 by unknown soldier, "Wofford's Georgia Brigade."

<sup>169</sup> The Union troops on the Stony Hill belonged to Brig. Gen. John Caldwell's 2<sup>nd</sup> Corps division. These troops were battling Kershaw's line, and therefore were facing south. Wofford's advance along the Wheatfield road was eastward, or to the right-rear of Caldwell's right flank.

<sup>170</sup> Letter to the editors, dated July 25, 1863 by unknown soldier, "Wofford's Georgia Brigade";

Coddington, *The Gettysburg Campaign*, 403, 405, 406.

<sup>171</sup> Gallagher, ed., *Fighting for the Confederacy*, 240.

<sup>172</sup> *OR*, Series 1, 27(1):897.

<sup>173</sup> Humphreys to McLaws, January 6, 1878, SHC.

<sup>174</sup> *OR*, Series 1, 27(1):379-380. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Corps division was Brig. Gen. John Caldwell's, which eventually fought in the Wheatfield.

<sup>175</sup> E. P. Alexander, "The Great Charge and Artillery Fighting at Gettysburg," *Battles and Leaders*, 3, 360.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*; Gallagher, ed., *Fighting for the Confederacy*, 240; *OR*, Series 1, 27(2):308, 429-430. The six batteries Alexander took forward in this advance all belonged to his artillery battalion: Capt. Woolfolk's Ashland (Virginia) battery, Capt. Jordan's Bedford (Virginia) battery, Lt. Gilbert's Brooks (South Carolina) battery, Capt. Moody's Madison (Louisiana) Light Artillery, Capt. Parker's Virginia battery, and Capt. Taylor's Virginia battery. Alexander had just ordered Jordan's and Woolfolk's batteries up from reserve in order to reinforce his gun line on Warfield Ridge when Barksdale and Wofford advanced. Instead of stopping, the two batteries continued on in the wake of the infantry. All six batteries deployed east of the Emmitsburg road, from the Sherfy farmstead to the Peach Orchard. See Alexander interview, May 30, 1894, "Position of Troops," 2, 10-12 and Bachelder, "Second Day's Battle" Map.

<sup>177</sup> Gallagher, ed., *Fighting for the Confederacy*, 240.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, 240, 244-245. Alexander later elaborated on the disadvantages his batteries faced on July 3 when positioned on the Peach Orchard Knoll and Emmitsburg Road Ridge, "All the vicinity of the Peach Orchard, any how, was very unfavorable ground for us, generally sloping toward the enemy. This exposed all our movements to his view, & our horses, limbers, & caissons to his fire. If any who read this ever go over that ground, & then see the beautiful ridge positions from which the enemy could answer us...I know we will have their sympathies."

<sup>179</sup> McNeily, "Barksdale's Brigade," *MHS*, 238.

- <sup>180</sup> A. A. Humphreys' testimony, *JCCW*, p. 392; *OR*, Series 1, 27(1):533; *OR*, Series 1, 27(2):614.
- <sup>181</sup> *OR*, Series 1, 27(1):543; "Address of Maj. Gen. George H. Sharpe," Dedication of the 120<sup>th</sup> New York monument, June 25, 1889 in, *New York at Gettysburg*, 2, 820; C.D. Westbrook, "On the Firing Line," *National Tribune*, September 20, 1890. It is nearly impossible to state how much of the Excelsior brigade rallied after their retreat from Sherfy's young peach orchard, where they were positioned or how long they stood on this new line. A review of the casualties suffered gives some indication of involvement of each. The losses for the 70<sup>th</sup>, 71<sup>st</sup>, 72<sup>nd</sup>, and 74<sup>th</sup> New York were at or less than 38 percent. The 73<sup>rd</sup>, heavily engaged in the peach orchard, as described above, lost 46 percent. The role and losses of the 120<sup>th</sup> New York will be described shortly.
- <sup>182</sup> Esick G. Wilber to parents, July 10, 1863, typed transcript, USAMHI.
- <sup>183</sup> *OR*, Series 1, 27(1):553.
- <sup>184</sup> *OR*, Series 1, 27(1):554; C. Van Santvoord, *The One Hundred and Twentieth Regiment, New York State Volunteers* (Rondut, New York: Press of Kingston Freeman, 1894), 74.
- <sup>185</sup> Westbrook, "On the Firing Line," *National Tribune*, September 20, 1890; Busey and Martin, *Regimental Strengths*, 246.
- <sup>186</sup> A. A. Humphreys' testimony, *JCCW*, 392.
- <sup>187</sup> *OR*, Series 1, 27(1) 533; Humphreys to wife, July 4, 1863 and Humphreys to "My dear Campbell," August 16, 1863, both in A. A. Humphreys Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania; Busey and Martin, *Regimental Strengths*, 246.
- <sup>188</sup> McNeily, "Barksdale's Brigade," *MHS*, 237, 242.
- <sup>189</sup> *OR*, Series 1, 27(1):483, 533; Wilcox, "Wilcox to the Rescue," *Philadelphia Weekly Times*, November 24, 1877; Herbert, "A Short History of the 8<sup>th</sup> Ala. Regt.," Lafayette McLaws Papers, UNC; William Abernathy, *Our Mess, Southern Gallantry and Privations* (McKinney, Texas: McKintex Press), 32.
- <sup>190</sup> Bigelow, *Peach Orchard*, 16; McNeily, "Barksdale's Brigade," *MHS*, 238; Humphreys, "Biographical Sketch of William Barksdale," J.F.H. Claiborne Papers, SHC. This wound was probably to Barksdale's left leg, as A.T. Hamilton, Asst. Surgeon of the 148<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania later wrote that the general's left leg had been "broken by two missiles." See Joseph W. Muffly, ed., *The Story of Our Regiment: A History of the 148<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania Vols.* (Des Moines: Kenyon Printing & Manufacturing Co., 1904), 173.
- <sup>191</sup> McNeily, "Barksdale's Brigade," *MHS*, 243.
- <sup>192</sup> William Love, "Mississippi at Gettysburg," *MHS*, 9 (1906), 32; Humphreys, "Biographical Sketch of William Barksdale," J.F.H. Claiborne Papers, SHC.
- <sup>193</sup> John J. Hood, "Tribute to Gen. Barksdale," Address to Barksdale Camp of the Sons of Confederate Veterans, as published in, *Confederate Veteran*, November 1901, 503; Charles Richardson to Bachelder, May 8, 1868, in Ladd, eds., *BP*, 1, 338-341; E. P. Harman to Hon. W.S. Decker, August 16, 1886, in, "Willard's Brigade at Gettysburg," Richardson Papers, Ontario County Historical Society, New York, copy and transcript in GNMP.
- <sup>194</sup> *OR*, Series 1, 27(1):882; B.G. Humphreys to McLaws, January 6, 1878, SHC; Bigelow, *Peach Orchard*, 16.
- <sup>195</sup> Bigelow, *Peach Orchard*, 55-56; Humphreys to McLaws, January 6, 1878, SHC.
- <sup>196</sup> Bigelow to Bachelder, n. d., in Ladd, eds., *BP*, 1, 173; Bigelow, *Peach Orchard*, 56.
- <sup>197</sup> John Bigelow, *Supplement to the Peach Orchard, Gettysburg* (Minneapolis: Kimball-Storer Co., 1911), 46; Bachelder, "Second Day's Battle" Map; *OR*, Series 1, 27(1):882.
- <sup>198</sup> *OR*, Series 1, 27(1):872, 882; Hunt, "The Second Day," *Battles and Leaders*, 3, 302, 310; Bigelow, *Supplement to the Peach Orchard*, 37.
- <sup>199</sup> Bigelow, *Peach Orchard*, 56; Bigelow, *Supplement to the Peach Orchard*, 47; Baker, *History of the Ninth*, 60.
- <sup>200</sup> Bigelow to Bachelder, n. d., in Ladd, eds., *BP*, 1, 173; Bigelow, *Peach Orchard*, 56.
- <sup>201</sup> Baker, *History of the Ninth*, 60-61; Bigelow, *Peach Orchard*, 56; *OR*, Series 1, 27(1):882.
- <sup>202</sup> Bigelow, *Peach Orchard*, 56; Bigelow to Bachelder, n. d., Ladd, eds., *BP*, 1, 174; Campbell, ed., "Grand Terrible Drama," 115; Bigelow sketch accompanying February 20, 1901 letter to War Department Battlefield Commission, "Position of Troops," 2, 34; Baker, *History of the Ninth*, 61.
- <sup>203</sup> Bigelow to Bachelder, n. d., in Ladd, eds., *BP*, 1, 174.
- <sup>204</sup> Bigelow, *Peach Orchard*, 56-57; Bigelow to Bachelder, n. d., in Ladd, eds., *BP*, 1, 174.
- <sup>205</sup> Bigelow to Bachelder, n. d., in Ladd, eds., *BP*, 1, 174; Bigelow speech at the dedication of the 9<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Battery monument at Gettysburg, as quoted in Baker, *History of the Ninth*, 214-215;

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Bigelow, *Peach Orchard*, 57.

<sup>206</sup> Bigelow to John Bachelder, n. d., in Ladd, eds., *BP*, 1, 174; Bigelow, *Peach Orchard*, 57; "Artist Reed Given a Medal by the U. S. Government for His Brave Deed at Gettysburg," *The Boston Daily Globe*, August 13, 13, 1895.

<sup>207</sup> John Bigelow to the Adjutant General, June 19, 1895, Charles Reed Medal of Honor File, NA; Bigelow, *Peach Orchard*, 57; Bigelow speech at the dedication of the 9<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Battery monument at Gettysburg, as quoted in Baker, *History of the Ninth*, 215; Bigelow February 20, 1901 letter, "Position of Troops," 2, 33. One bullet passed through Bigelow's side above his hip, tearing a five-inch gash in the muscles of the stomach, and the other struck the little finger on his left hand.

<sup>208</sup> "How the Battle Was Won," *Minneapolis Saturday Journal*, August 13, 1895; Baker, *History of the Ninth*, 81, 216; Bigelow, *Peach Orchard*, 57; Bigelow to Bachelder, n. d., in Ladd, eds., *BP*, 1, 174.

<sup>209</sup> Baker, *History of the Ninth*, 63-64; Return for July, 1863, Monthly Returns, Regimental Papers, Ninth Massachusetts Battery, NA.

<sup>210</sup> "Saved His Captain at Gettysburg," unknown newspaper, unknown date, Charles Reed Collection, LC; John Bigelow Pension Record, NA; John Bigelow to the Adjutant General, June 19, 1895, Charles Reed Medal of Honor File, NA.

<sup>211</sup> "Saved His Captain at Gettysburg," unknown newspaper, unknown date, Charles Reed Collection, LC; John Bigelow Pension Record, NA; John Bigelow to the Adjutant General, June 19, 1895, Charles Reed Medal of Honor File, NA; Bigelow to Bachelder, n. d., in Ladd, eds., *BP*, 1, 175. Reed received his Medal of Honor in 1895.

<sup>212</sup> McNeily, "Barksdale's Brigade," *MHS*, 249.

<sup>213</sup> Humphreys to McLaws, January 6, 1878, SHC; McNeily, "Barksdale's Brigade," *MHS*, 249.

<sup>214</sup> *OR*, Series 1, 27(1):882-823; Hunt, "The Second Day," *Battles and Leaders*, 3, 310.

<sup>215</sup> Bigelow letter, *Minneapolis Journal*, August 27, 1895; *OR*, Series 1, 27(1):660, 897; Bigelow, *Supplement to the Peach Orchard*, 38. Capt. George Randolph was the 3<sup>rd</sup> Corps chief of artillery, but had been wounded "early in the action" and therefore was probably not present when McGilvery pulled together his new artillery line (See *OR*, Series 1, 27(1):585). However, there is no proof that McGilvery was given official authority over the 3<sup>rd</sup> Corps batteries. It cannot be proven beyond all doubt that McGilvery was the "officer of General Sickles' staff" that Martin complained about. The similarities, however, in the descriptions by Dow and Martin (that McGilvery/unknown "officer" were affiliated with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Corps), along with the fact that Watson ended up on the Plum Run Line, strongly indicate it was McGilvery who seized control of the battery.

<sup>216</sup> *OR*, Series 1, 27(1):660, 882-823, 885, 890, 897; Raus, *Generation on the March*, 28, 169. If Bigelow's guns are included in the "Plum Run Line" (as they gave McGilvery the time he needed to establish it), then three of five batteries, and eleven of nineteen guns, were from McGilvery's brigade. McGilvery mentioned a "volunteer battery, which I have never been able to learn the name of" that was part of this line. Various studies have not been able to identify this battery, the number of guns it contained, its position along this line and how long it stayed in action.

<sup>217</sup> Bachelder, "Second Day's Battle" Map; *OR*, Series 1, 27(1):897.

<sup>218</sup> *OR*, Series 1, 27(1):882-823; "How One Brave Battery Saved the Federal Left," *New York Times*, June 29, 1913, copy in GNMP.

<sup>219</sup> Humphreys to McLaws, January 6, 1878, SHC.

<sup>220</sup> *OR*, Series 1, 27(1):660.

<sup>221</sup> McNeily, "Barksdale's Brigade," *MHS*, 262.

<sup>222</sup> Humphreys to McLaws, January 6, 1878, SHC.

<sup>223</sup> Campbell, ed., "Grand Terrible Drama," 117.

<sup>224</sup> *OR*, Series 1, 27(1):883, 890, 897. Apparently the "mystery battery" also withdrew around this same time.

<sup>225</sup> *OR*, Series 1, 27(1):882-823, 897.

<sup>226</sup> Maj. John J. Hood, "Tribute to Gen. Barksdale," Address to the Barksdale Camp of Sons of Confederate Veterans, in *Confederate Veteran*, November (1901), 503; *OR*, Series 1, 27(2):618.

<sup>227</sup> *OR*, Series 1, 27(1):897. The "woods in our rear" were the Codori-Trostle woodlot, to Dow's left rear, along with the John Swisher and William Patterson woodlots along the Taneytown road.

<sup>228</sup> Bigelow letter, *Minneapolis Journal*, August 27, 1895.

<sup>229</sup> *OR*, Series 1, 27(1):898.

- <sup>230</sup> McGilvery to Gov. Abner Coburn, July 20, 1863, Maine State Archives.
- <sup>231</sup> Busey and Martin, *Regimental Strengths*, 44; *OR*, Series 1, 27(1):472, 474, 475; Humphreys, "Biographical Sketch of William Barksdale," J.F.H. Claiborne Papers, SHC.
- <sup>232</sup> Richardson to Bachelder, May 8, 1868, in Ladd, eds., *BP*, 1, 339; Arabella M. Willson, *Disaster, Struggle, Triumph, The Adventures of 1000 "Boys in Blue,"* (Albany: The Argus Company, Printers, 1870), 178; Humphreys, "Biographical Sketch of William Barksdale," J.F.H. Claiborne Papers, SHC.
- <sup>233</sup> McNeily, "Barksdale's Brigade," *MHS*, 236; Richardson letters to Bachelder, May 8, 1868 and August 18, 1869, in Ladd, eds., *BP*, 1, 340. John F. Randolph, a lieutenant in the 126<sup>th</sup> New York, might have been the very man Capt. Richardson mentioned. In 1890 Randolph wrote that, "I stepped over his (Barksdale) bleeding body as our line advanced." See Randolph to Alden Hays, April 21, 1890, as quoted in "General Alexander Hays and the Third Division, Second Army Corps, At the Battle of Gettysburg." Information compiled by George A. Hays, February 1957, photocopy in GNMP.
- <sup>234</sup> *OR*, Series 1, 27(1):476; Alexander, "The Great Charge and Artillery Fighting at Gettysburg," *Battles and Leaders*, 3, 360. It was also this artillery fire that killed Col. Willard, who was partially decapitated as his brigade fell back across Plum Run. See Ezra Simons, *One Hundred and Twenty-fifth New York State Volunteers* (New York: Published by Ezra Simons, 1888), 112-113.
- <sup>235</sup> Humphreys to McLaws, January 6, 1878, SHC.
- <sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*; *OR*, Series 1, 27(1):653-654.
- <sup>237</sup> Humphreys to McLaws, January 6, 1878, SHC.
- <sup>238</sup> Longstreet, "Lee in Pennsylvania," *Annals of War*, 422-423.
- <sup>239</sup> Busey and Martin, *Regimental Strengths*, 245, 246, 247, 260; Campbell, ed., "Grand Terrible Drama," 117.
- <sup>240</sup> Busey and Martin, *Regimental Strengths*, 281, 282; Robert K. Krick, *Lee's Colonels* (Dayton, Ohio: Morningside Press, 1979), 75, 152, 178, 233; Muffly, ed., *History of the 148<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania*, 173. Among other things, Barksdale was reported to have told his Union captors that "he desired peace, but only upon terms that would recognize the Confederacy" and the warning, "that Lee would show us a trick before morning; that before we knew it Ewell would be thundering in our rear." See Muffly, ed., *History of the 148<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania*, 173.
- <sup>241</sup> James W. Silver, ed., *A Life for the Confederacy, As Recorded in the Pocket Diaries of Pvt. Robert A. Moore* (Jackson, Tennessee: McCowat-Mercer Press, Inc, 1959), 153. Moore was killed just two and a half months later at Chickamauga on September 20, 1863.
- <sup>242</sup> William Emory Sherfy, *The Sherfy Family in the United States, 1751-1948*, (Greensburg, Indiana: H.E. Sherfy, n. d.), 207, photocopy in GNMP. The barn was accidentally destroyed on July 3 by a fire ignited by errant artillery shells.
- <sup>243</sup> Joseph Sherfy Federal Land Claim, NA, copy in GNMP; Georg, "The Sherfy Farm," 27; Martin, et al., *History of the Fifty-seventh Regiment*, 96. The livestock lost included one cow, two calves, two hogs, and twenty chickens.
- <sup>244</sup> Moran, "A New View of Gettysburg," *Philadelphia Weekly Times*, April 13, 1882; Moran, "A Fire Zouave, Memoirs of a Member of the Excelsior Brigade" *National Tribune*, November 6 and November 13, 1890. Moran was wounded by a shell burst during the last stages of the fighting in Sherfy's young peach orchard and captured. He spent the next 20 months in Confederate prisons, before his exchange in March 1865.
- <sup>245</sup> Deane, ed., *My Dear Wife...*, 59, 60, 61.